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**HINTS ON PREACHING.**



**HINTS**  
**ON**  
**PREACHING:**  
**DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF THE**  
**YOUNGER CLERGY,**  
**AND OF**  
**CANDIDATES FOR HOLY ORDERS.**

**BY**  
**J. JONES, M.A.**  
**ARCHDEACON OF LIVERPOOL.**

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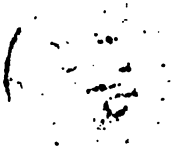
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TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND MOST REVEREND  
JOHN BIRD,  
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,  
PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND AND METROPOLITAN,  
THE FOLLOWING PAGES,  
ORIGINALLY WRITTEN, AND NOW PUBLISHED  
AT HIS SUGGESTION,  
ARE HUMBLY AND DUTIFULLY INSCRIBED  
BY THE AUTHOR.





## PREFACE.

How well instructed soever a newly-ordained Clergyman may be in the great truths of Christianity, and how justly soever he may appreciate their momentous importance, he may at the same time experience considerable perplexity as to the best mode of communicating them from the pulpit. Anxious to approve himself unto God as "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," he cannot fail to feel his want of much instruction on this important point, and will turn with the deepest interest to every source of information within his reach. "It is impossible, indeed, to contemplate calmly the situation of a young man, who is first called to appear in this most important, most respon-

sible post, and who ascends the pulpit with little advantage from previous instruction, and with none from previous exercise: it is impossible to see him preparing to teach others, and to see hundreds hanging on his lips for that bread which is to feed their souls, without mourning over the circumstances under which this part of the Ministry is generally commenced. He may have knowledge, he may have zeal, he may have affection, he may have qualities which hereafter may render him eminently useful; but his first efforts in Preaching are generally nothing better than experiments which only lead to conviction of error. He naturally begins by imitating the manner of some one whom he has been accustomed to admire, or by attempting some mode which he has been imagining to himself. But his first efforts are attempts at an art which he has never studied, and where he has no adviser to direct him. Even the theory of the system is unknown; and it is probable that years must

elapse before experience and reflection will lead him to discover that mode of Preaching which is suited to his powers, and best calculated to edify his hearers.”\*

Hence the importance of furnishing the youthful Minister with specific instructions on the subject of Preaching, such as the following pages seek to impart. And should they in any instance prove beneficial to the reader, let him remember that his debt of gratitude will be due, not so much to the author, as to the distinguished Prelate at whose suggestion they are now published, or rather re-published with large additions, and in a separate treatise.†

How far the author may have succeeded in his present attempt to carry out the wishes of the Archbishop he will not venture to surmise : but he feels assured that he has done his best, and that too at a time of life when, looking

\* Raikes' Remarks on Clerical Education.

† The major part appeared in the author's edition of *Porter's Homiletics* in the form of Notes and Appendices.

back through a long vista of years, he can reproduce to his mind the image of many a pulpit orator, whose failure or success afforded him lessons of instruction, and furnished him with many of his present *Hints on Preaching*.

He will only add, in conclusion, his earnest hope and desire that the Divine blessing may accompany this humble attempt to further the endeavours of his younger brethren to promote their own improvement as Christian Preachers. And greatly indeed will he rejoice, if this little work, so kindly countenanced by His Grace, should meet also with some measure of favour from other Prelates of our Church, and more especially from his own Diocesan, under whose kind and paternal government it has been his privilege to be placed, and to whom he feels himself united by the ties not only of fealty, but of gratitude and respect.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—*St. Mark xvi. 15.*

¶ *Then the Bishop shall deliver to every one of them kneeling, the Bible into his hand, saying,*

"Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to Minister the holy Sacraments in the Congregation where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto."—*The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests.*

ONE of the most important considerations connected with the Christian Ministry, and too frequently lost sight of in the present day, is its divine institution. When our Saviour quitted this lower world, He left the government of his Church expressly in the hands of his Apostles, whom He promised to endow with every necessary gift, and whose decrees He declared should be binding upon his disciples to the end of time. Their official acts were virtually the acts

of Christ Himself, for they acted not only by his delegated authority, but under the immediate influence of his Holy Spirit.

Now we know from their own writings, as well as from the testimony of ecclesiastical history, that they not only ordained men to the ministry themselves, but gave authority to others to do the same. Thus were Timothy and Titus empowered and enjoined to "set in order things that were wanting" in the several Churches which they visited, "and to ordain elders in every city." From that day to this, elders have been ordained by men who were severally authorized by their immediate predecessors; and of every one who has been thus ordained, it may be said in the language of St. Paul, that a dispensation of the gospel has been committed to him, and that woe will be unto him if he preach not the gospel.

That the Ministers of God's Word and Sacraments are to be considered as divinely appointed to their respective offices, may be deduced also from the general tenor of the writings of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul, in adverting to the various agencies which were then employed for the benefit of the Church, and the spread of Christianity,

traces them all up to the great Head of the Church, as their origin and source. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."\* In a similar manner he speaks of himself and his fellow-labourers, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians,† where he traces up all to the same divine source: "All things are of God . . . . who hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." And in the same chapter he adds, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."

And is there not an important sense in which every Christian Minister, inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to 'desire the office of a presbyter,' as a thing pre-eminently 'good,' and regularly set apart to the same, by the imposition of authorized hands, may now be regarded as an "Ambassador for Christ?" And is he not justified in claiming from pro-

\* Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12.

† Ibid. v. 18.

fessed Christians such a recognition of his divine appointment, as is implied in the words of the Apostle: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God?"

But how much soever the ministerial office may be contemned by others; how low soever their conceptions of its authority or its source; the Minister himself must "magnify his office." It is of the utmost importance, that he entertain elevated notions both of its *sanctity* and its *dignity*. The welfare of the people committed to his charge, no less than the formation and maintenance of his own character, requires him to be well persuaded "of what dignity and of how great importance the office is, whereunto he has been called." Hence the stress which is laid upon it in the Ordination Service of our Church. 'And now again,' (observes the Bishop, whilst addressing those about to be admitted into the priestly office,) 'we exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you have in remembrance, into how high a dignity, and to how weighty an office and charge ye are called: that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach, and pre-

monish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.'

There is a sense, doubtless, in which a Christian presbyter may be justly styled the minister or pastor of his flock; *their* watchman, *their* messenger, *their* steward: but in a still higher and far more appropriate sense he is the minister of CHRIST, the watchman of the LORD OF HOSTS, the messenger of JEHOVAH, the steward of GOD. As far as it respects the objects of his care, and watchfulness, and ministration, he is *theirs*, but when his original appointment, the source of his authority, his ultimate responsibility are referred to, he is wholly and entirely the LORD's.

Such is the scriptural view which he should take of the transcendent dignity of his sacred office. If he regard it with less respect and veneration, he will not fail to act in many respects in a manner at variance with its true character; a more secular spirit, and meaner motives and designs than become the sacred office, will be sure to mar his ministrations. "The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the

Christian Ministry, our right arm is withered, nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though in other professions what is enthusiasm, is in ours the dictate of sobriety and truth.”\*

The reluctance which some people feel to admit this view of the subject, may have arisen in part from a just indignation at the claims which have been set up by an arrogant priesthood to the almost idolatrous homage of a superstitious and ignorant people. But it should be remembered that the abuse of a doctrine or a truth is no just argument against its legitimate use. What, though proud and ambitious men arrogate *to themselves* that which is due only to their *office*, do they thereby make void the declarations and appointments of the unchangeable and faithful God? No: “let God be true, though every man be found a liar,”—let his own divine institution be had in honour, though all who are invested with it be deserving only of his displeasure.

\* Robert Hall's Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Ministry.

There is no necessary connection between the dignity of the office, and that of the person who sustains it. The Christian Minister who has felt the power of the gospel on his own heart, instead of priding himself upon his supposed personal dignity, will be filled with self-abasement at the thought of his unworthiness to be entrusted with so weighty a charge. His feelings will be those of the Apostle when he exclaimed "who is sufficient for these things?" Whilst he magnifies his office he will debase himself.

In this, as well as in everything else connected with the ministerial profession, St. Paul\* is indeed an illustrious example. He entertained at once the most exalted idea of his office, and the most humble opinion respecting himself. "Unto me," he observes, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."† What more lowly expression could he use, than that

\* "That a Minister may learn how to *magnify his office*, let him study the character, the spirit, and the history of ST. PAUL. His life and death were one magnifying of his office."—*Cecil's Remains*.

† Ephesians iii. 8.



which he here employs, or rather invents,\* to designate his personal unworthiness? It did not satisfy him to say that he was inferior to other saints, or even the "least" of all saints: such was his humility that he could scarcely deem himself worthy to be numbered amongst them at all; and he could only say that, if it were possible, he was "less than the least."

And yet we know, as well from his own testimony as from the history of his life, that he was not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles. If there be a character unfolded to us in the pages of sacred history, whether of the Old Testament or the New, more strikingly noble, disinterested, and benevolent than another, it is that of the Apostle Paul. How large a portion of the New Testament itself is the composition of his pen! To how many millions have his words given light and wisdom, consolation and joy! It is impossible to peruse those writings without forming the highest idea of their author—of the sublimity of his conceptions, the strength of his faith, the expan-

\* *ελαχιστοτερος*, a comparative, formed from the superlative *ελαχιστος*.

sion of his heart, the confidence of his hope, the warmth of his affections, the ardour of his zeal, and the disinterestedness of his purpose. Yet, such was the depth of his humility, and the penitential regret with which he retraced his steps as a "persecutor and injurious," that in sincerity of soul he described himself as "less than the least of all saints!"

And as the Christian Minister is thus taught to humble himself, whilst he magnifies his office, so is he instructed also to regard his appointment as a special privilege, which should awaken his gratitude to "the Father of lights, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift." "Unto me," says the Apostle, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." But why, it may be asked, did he esteem such an appointment to be a "grace" or a "favour?" Was it a "favour" to be exposed to the world's scorn and persecution? Was that office to be accounted honourable which insured universal contempt, or that appointment valuable which stripped its possessor of every earthly good? Yet, St. Paul accounted it such; and, next to his conversion, he thanked God for "putting

him into the ministry." He accounted it a favour because it gave him an opportunity of gratifying the benevolent affections of his heart. He longed for the salvation of mankind; for this he accounted not his life dear unto him. The office was one whose duties he delighted to perform, notwithstanding all the privations and sufferings it imposed. He preached the Gospel "not by constraint, but willingly;" "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PREACHER'S OBJECT.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."—2 *Tim.* ii. 15.

No one enters upon a profession without having some one paramount OBJECT in view. And can there be a question what should be the paramount object of the young Clergyman, on receiving his high and holy Commission to "preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments?" Should it not be to make full proof of his Ministry? Should it not be to glorify Him who has called him by his Holy Spirit, and by the instrumentality of his Church and her Rulers? If to glorify God be the chief end of all men, how obviously is the Christian Minister bound, in a matter so nearly allied to the Divine honour as that of promulgating the Gospel of his Son, to keep that end continually in view! In all his teach-

ing he must study to approve himself unto God—to preach not himself, but JESUS CHRIST; and to strive to gain the approbation of his hearers no further than is consistent with their real and eternal well-being.

If popularity be regarded by him as an *end* to be pursued for its own sake, rather than as a *means* to promote the honour of Christ in the salvation of men, he betrays a spirit inconsistent with that of a true and faithful Pastor, and must be classed with those of whom St. Paul speaks, when he says, “All seek their own; not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” And though he may have his reward in the plaudits of admiring friends, he can never entertain a well-grounded hope of receiving at last the approving testimony of Him, who will say to every trustworthy and disinterested herald of salvation: “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

Under the influence of this paramount object, and prevailing determination, the Christian Preacher will aim, in the first place, to be *faithful*. In whatever aspect, indeed, we regard his sacred office there is nothing that can excuse the want of fidelity. As a “Steward”—a “Watchman”—a “Shepherd”—a “Leader”

—"it is required that a man be found faithful." He must be faithful to his Master, and faithful to his fellow-servants. Whilst he shuns not to declare unto his hearers the whole counsel of God, he must seek to "give to every one his portion of meat in due season."

But to fidelity there must be added judgment and discretion, tenderness and love, without which the efforts of the most earnest Preacher, may be greatly hindered, if not entirely ruined. He must resolve therefore to cultivate all the faculties, dispositions, sympathies, and feelings which are required in one who would not only win souls to Christ, but keep them from wandering from the fold, and forsaking the Captain of their salvation. He must seek, in short, to come up to the requirements so beautifully depicted by Bishop Ken, in his portrait of a Christian Pastor:

"Give me the Priest these graces shall possess—  
Of an Ambassador the just address.  
A Father's tenderness, a Shepherd's care,  
A Leader's courage, which the cross can bear;  
A Ruler's awe, a Watchman's wakeful eye,  
A Pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply;  
A Fisher's patience, and a Labourer's toil,  
A Guide's dexterity to disembroil;  
A Prophet's inspiration from above,  
A Teacher's knowledge, and a Saviour's love.

Give me the Priest, a light upon a hill,  
Whose rays the whole circumference can fill;  
In God's own word, and sacred learning vers'd,  
Deep in the study of the heart immersed."

But all this implies the necessity of personal religion. We must never indeed permit ourselves to separate the MINISTER from the MAN. To be good "stewards" of the mysteries, we must first be good "citizens" of the kingdom.

Does not this thought seem to have been uppermost in the mind of St. Paul, when he urged his son Timothy; "Take heed unto THYSELF, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save thyself, and them that hear thee." For what is a man's self, but his heart, his mind, his principles, his conduct, his affections? These are to be regulated daily and hourly, and throughout the whole of life, by the very same Gospel, in the use of the same means, and in dependence upon the same Divine assistance, whether we be ministers or laymen.

There is nothing more dangerous or delusive than the notion that the *office* will necessarily sanctify or improve the *man*: and that the Clergy have less necessity for watchfulness, self-suspicion, and prayer, than other men.

For what though we may be less exposed to a certain class of sins, than those whose avocations throw them largely into the society of the wicked? Have we not many sore temptations of our own to contend with—temptations peculiar to ourselves? Is there no danger from familiarity with holy things? Is there no risk of treading the temple floor with footsteps of unhallowed levity, as we pass, from day to day, along its solemn aisles, or penetrate its deep and hallowed recesses? Is there no tendency in the habitual handling of the shew bread, or in the unceasing offering up of the sweet incense at the golden altar, to forget the sacredness which necessarily belongs to them?

Instead then of taking for granted that his public ministrations, or even his private studies will serve under all circumstances, to keep him in the way that he should go, and promote his sanctification, the Preacher should give the more earnest heed that he receive not the grace of God in vain, nor become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Nor let him forget, at the same time, that where much is given, much will certainly be required both by God and man. To all our exhortations to our people to become spiritually



mind, and to set their affections on things above, they may most reasonably reply,

“But chiefly, ye should lift your gaze  
Above the world's uncertain haze,  
And look with calm unwavering eye  
On the bright fields beyond the sky ;  
Ye, who your Lord's commission bear,  
His way of mercy to prepare.  
Angels, He calls you ! Be your strife  
To lead on earth an Angel's life.” \*

But let not the young Preacher forget to take heed also to the DOCTRINE he has received. For, as it has been well expressed by an enlightened and distinguished Prelate ; “If the Christian Minister boasts of deriving his *commission* to preach the Gospel by an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles, consistency requires that he should apply to the same Apostles for the *doctrine* which he is to deliver.†

The importance of this suggestion to the Minister of Christ at all times, but especially in these lax and dangerous days, cannot be overstated. Almost everything depends upon the question, ‘What doctrines does he incul-

\* Christian Year, Second Sunday in Advent.

† Archbishop Sumner's Apostolic Preaching.

cate?' His own, or the Lord's? Those which he learns from Christ, and his Apostles, or those which he derives from the baseless traditions of fallible men, or from the airy imaginings of a philosophy, falsely so called?

But let him also take heed to the manner as well as to the matter of the instruction he imparts—to his Preaching, as well as to the Articles of his Belief. Whilst he is careful to preach "the truth as it is in Jesus," and, so far as he can, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—he must seek to do it acceptably to God, and profitably to men.

Much wisdom is required for the proper and judicious performance of this very important part of our ministerial duty. For what though some affect to think lightly of Preaching as a mere human institution? What though they regard it, with the Greeks of old, as "foolishness," compared with any other ordinance? We are taught by an inspired Apostle to speak of it in far different terms,—as the great instrument for the conversion of the sinner from the error of his way, and for the building up of believers in their most holy faith? "It hath pleased God," says he, "by the" so-called "foolishness of preaching to save

them that believe." And yet not every kind of preaching will suffice for this end—not the preaching of mere ethics—not the dogmatic preaching of the Cloisters or the Schools,—but true, scriptural, *Christian* preaching, commencing, continuing, and ending in CHRIST. We must preach (as did the Apostle) "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Let this, then, be the grand object of the Preacher's aim. As a herald of salvation—as the κήρυξ of his risen and ascended Lord,—let him go forth and proclaim His mercy to a ruined world—and seek, by every effort in his power, to save the souls of his hearers. Let him go forth and preach Christ so plainly that none can mistake his meaning, and with so much earnestness and affection, that he may hope, with the Divine blessing, to rouse many from a death in trespasses and sins,—and bring back many a wanderer to the cross—the bosom—the fold of the Redeemer!

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PREACHER'S CHOICE OF SUBJECTS.

"The selection of subjects which any Preacher will make for his public discourses, will correspond with his principal *end* in preaching."—*Porter*.

"It is a canon in sermon-writing, never to be lost sight of, that a Clergyman is to write specifically for his own people."—*Anonymous*.

How frequently is that little question, 'What was the *text*?' put to a member of the family, on his return home from Church; while the far more important question, 'What was the *subject* of the discourse?' is but seldom asked. And indeed it is well for the reputation of the Preacher, in too many instances, that it is so; as the necessary reply to the latter inquiry would be: 'I really cannot say what was the *subject* of the sermon; but I can tell you the *text*, to which, however, there was only a

passing allusion. There were several useful, and some rather striking observations in the sermon, but they were very desultory, without coherence, and without point.'

The difficulty of fixing upon a suitable subject, and of selecting an appropriate text is sometimes felt even by an experienced Preacher; how much more must it be felt by a novice? Not that the range of profitable subjects is contracted, or that the number of suitable texts is small: on the contrary, they are so vast in multitude, and so wide in extent, that the mind is sometimes bewildered by the very profusion; and the Preacher scarcely knows which to prefer. No sooner is his attention fastened upon one striking passage, than it is drawn off by another still more attractive.

The temptation thus to fly from subject to subject, and from text to text, must by all means be resisted. It is fraught at once with injury to the mind, and with the waste of much valuable time.

One of the best modes, perhaps, of counter-acting such a tendency is that of invariably fixing upon a text on the previous Sunday Evening, or on the Monday Morning following

—a plan which has not only been strongly recommended, but successfully adopted by some of our most distinguished Divines. A habit of promptitude will thus be acquired, and a facility in coming to a decision speedily attained.

So important is this suggestion to the success of the young Preacher, that it may be well to commend it more forcibly to his notice by adducing the testimony of other writers. "It is important," says Cecil, "to begin preparation early. If it be driven off late, accidents may occur, which may prevent due attention to the subject. If the latter days of the week are occupied, and the mind driven into a corner, the sermon will usually be raw and undigested. Take time to reject what ought to be rejected, and to supply what ought to be supplied."

Dr. Hammond is said to have had always a subject in hand; and 'no sooner had he finished one sermon than he commenced another.' Of Bishop Sanderson also a similar testimony is given by his biographer, Isaac Walton.

Still further to assist the young Clergyman in coming to a decision in his choice of subjects, he is strongly recommended to restrict

his search, for a while at least, within a certain defined range of subjects. And here our Church Calendar comes at once to his aid; and the Book of Common Prayer will prove to be his best guide. For what better course can he possibly pursue, than that which is marked out for him by the Fasts and Festivals,\* and other recurring seasons of the ecclesiastical year? Commencing at the season at which he has been ordained, let him go on, from week to week till, in the annual course, he returns to it again, after having gone through the entire history of his blessed Saviour, from the manger to the cross, and from the cross to his throne of glory in the heavens.

“ Yes, Lord ! of Thee from year to year  
The Church's solemn chant we hear,  
As from thy cradle to thy throne  
She swells her high heart-cheering tone.” †

And whilst such a series of sermons cannot fail to interest a Christian congregation, it will

\* “ It is an unpardonable piece of negligence for a Preacher to omit noticing the particular subjects applicable to the great Festivals of the Church. The Congregation come prepared for the occasion, and are justly disappointed if they hear a discourse entirely unconnected with it.”—*Paley*.

† Christian Year,—Tuesday in Easter Week.

prove to be no less profitable to the Preacher himself. He will thus be practically taught the connection which so intimately subsists between the doctrines of Christianity, and the history of Christ. The fall of man—the universal corruption of our race—the necessity of redemption—the typical and prophetic announcements of an Almighty Redeemer—his actual arrival—his example—his teaching—his atoning sufferings—his resurrection as the first-fruits of them that slept—his justifying righteousness—his renewing grace—his future advent—and his final allotments of weal or woe—will all come before the Preacher in turn, and claim his attention. Writing severally upon these leading subjects of divinity, as they recur in their order, with thoughtfulness and care, he will find that in the process he has not only written so many separate discourses, but compiled a little body of divinity. And so assuredly will his mind, his memory, and (with God's blessing) his heart also, be stored with most valuable truths in a tangible and connected form.

And when he has accomplished all this, he will still find an abundant supply both of subjects and of texts, for years to come, in



the various portions of Scripture appointed for the fifty-two weeks of the year. From the Gospels and Epistles, the Lessons, and the Psalms either read or chanted in the Services, what a variety of suggestive and pregnant texts may be easily culled.\* And very pleasant and profitable will it prove to the Preacher as well as to his flock to be thus conducted by the weekly Services of the Church, in sympathy with thousands similarly engaged. For thus

“Along the Church's central space  
The sacred weeks, with unfelt pace,  
Will bear us on from grace to grace.” †

But though this following of the Church's guidance in the choice of subjects is most important to a young Clergyman's self-improvement and usefulness as a Preacher, yet he should not shackle himself too much, nor deny himself all latitude in his excursions through the boundless field of Scripture, which is alike “given by inspiration of God, and profitable

\* I am glad to be able to cite the example of Cecil on this point. “I generally,” he says, “look into the portions of Scripture appointed by the Church to be read in the Services of the day.”—*Cecil's Remains*.

† Christian Year.

for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness."

Whilst in no instance should the subjects of the great Fasts and Festivals be permitted to pass unimproved, the experienced Preacher may, at other times, display the utmost variety in his discourses, both as to their subject-matter, and the passages selected as his texts.

And yet even here there are rules to be observed, which he cannot violate with impunity. In the first place, he should take care not to meddle with things too high for him. Unfulfilled prophecy—the times and the seasons appointed by the Father, and kept in his own power—and all the secret things which belong unto God, in contradistinction to the things revealed, which belong unto us, and unto our children—these form no proper subjects for discussion in the pulpit, especially where the Clergyman is young and inexperienced.

And so also as to other topics, which, however legitimate in themselves, are unsuitable to the attainments and abilities of the Preacher. He may possess largely all the elements of usefulness as a plain, practical, and experimental Preacher, and yet be altogether incompetent to discuss a subject requiring great

research, critical acumen, or logical precision. 'The wise Preacher,' observes Dr. Porter, 'will have some regard to his talents, and taste, and age, in determining upon the topics to be discussed in his public instructions. I mention *age*, because a sermon designed to investigate some abstruse point in religion, will be much more likely to meet with a favourable reception from the hearers, if the preacher is supposed to possess that maturity of judgment, and extensive knowledge of his subject, which nothing but a lengthened experience in his sacred work can give. The relation which the Preacher sustains to his audience, is connected with a distinct class of circumstances which good sense will not fail to take into the account. That may be a fit discourse for a stated Pastor, which would be very inappropriate if discussed by a stranger: and that which might seem affectation of zeal or learning in a single sermon, from an occasional preacher, might be unexceptionable as connected with a series of addresses to the same congregation.' \*

In selecting the subjects of his sermons the

\* Porter's Homiletics.

Preacher should aim also at *variety*. A sameness of subject, pursued month after month, will weary the most attentive audience. At the same time a fondness for mere *novelty* must by no means be fostered. The wise householder will be careful to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old: and, whilst he refrains from pampering a fastidious taste in his hearers, he will cheerfully meet the reasonable demands of a healthy appetite. A uniform and unvaried supply of food—the same as well in quality as in quantity—would prove at once distasteful and innutritious.

And here let it be remarked that the *historical* parts of Scripture afford an almost inexhaustible supply of subjects, as various in character as they are pregnant with instruction. To shew with what success a skilful worker may handle such interesting topics, it may be sufficient to mention two volumes of Sermons by the Rev. H. Melvill, M.A., “On certain of the less prominent facts and references in Holy Scripture,” and a small volume by the Rev. J. H. Gurney, M.A., chiefly on Old Testament histories.

On the question of priority of choice between subjects and texts, no certain rule can

be laid down. At one time the mind of the Preacher is filled with some particular *subject*, which he wishes to discuss with fulness and precision, and consequently he looks out for an appropriate text. At another time his mind fastens itself on some striking *text*, and he proceeds to inquire what are the subjects it involves, and what the lessons it inculcates. In the former case the temptation to the Preacher will be to make nothing of his text, regarding it merely as a *motto*; a practice obviously disrespectful to the word of God. For though it may not be requisite, under such circumstances, to explain the text, or formally to discuss it at any length, it should not be completely ignored. There should be at least an easy and natural connection between the text and the subject-matter of the discourse.

It is scarcely necessary perhaps in these days, to denounce the use of texts of a quaint, far-fetched, and fantastic character. But perhaps we do not take sufficient pains to seek out striking and highly suggestive passages. "I am persuaded," observes the late Henry Venn, "that we are very negligent in respect of our texts. Some of the most weighty and striking are never brought before the people.

Yet these are the texts which speak for themselves. You no sooner repeat them than you appear in your high and holy character as a messenger of the Lord of hosts." It is related of Cecil, by his biographer, that his most striking sermons were generally those which he preached from very short texts; such as, "My soul hangeth on Thee!" "All my fresh springs are in Thee!" "O Lord! teach me thy way!" "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." "In these sermons the whole subject had probably struck him at once; and what comes in this way is generally found to be more matured and forcible, than what the mind is obliged to excogitate by its own laborious efforts. As the subject grows out of the state of the mind at the time, there is that degree of affinity between them, which occasions the mind to seize it forcibly, and to clothe it with vivid colours. A train of the most natural associations presents itself, as one link draws with it its kindred links. The attention is gained; the mind is concentrated; Scripture and life present themselves without effort, in the natural relations which they bear to the subject that has full possession of the man, and composition then becomes easy and even interesting."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PREACHER'S METHOD.

\* \* "Cui lecta potenter erit res,  
Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo."—*Horace*.

"Qui rectè diviserit, numquam poterit in rerum ordine  
errare.—*Quintilian*.

THE inquiry, 'What was the Preacher's subject?' will sometimes be followed by another, still more important; 'How did he treat it?' 'What was his method in discussing it?' And the question, it must be admitted, is a very important one; for the same subject may be treated in various ways, all more or less excellent in themselves, or suitable to the peculiar occasion or circumstances.

A subject may be treated either dogmatically or practically, by argument or by reflections, controversially or by persuasive application.

Sometimes indeed it will be found that the subject or the text requires little more than a simple explanation of its meaning, and a few pertinent and striking remarks upon the several parts into which it naturally divides itself.

In the latter case little or no artificial method will be necessary, and the Preacher will do well literally to follow his text. And perhaps, generally speaking, such texts, and subjects so treated, should characterise the tenor of a young Clergyman's pulpit ministrations. He will generally find it the readiest method to himself, as well as the most interesting and instructive to his hearers.

In pursuing however such a method, he should take care to avoid formality and sameness. And with this view he should depart occasionally from his ordinary method, not only of selecting passages, but of discussing them. He will doubtless have his favourite method; but he must not restrict himself to its exclusive use. A monotony of method, no less than a monotony of subject, will rob his sermons of half their interest. The never ceasing announcement, Sunday after Sunday, of three chief divisions, each attended by its three spectre-like subdivisions, and subsequently fol-



lowed by three unvaried applications, cannot fail to try the patience of an audience to the utmost, and arm the careless hearer against the anticipated expostulation or reproof, which he sees advancing in the distance with a measured tread, and whose speed he can calculate to a fraction.

And here I will again quote the confirmatory remarks of perhaps the most eloquent and effective Preacher of his day.\* "May I be permitted," says he, "to remark, though it seems a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations we are perhaps too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons, we indulge too little of variety, and expose our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity, by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion, derived from just and affecting sentiments, be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every kind of public address! I cannot but imagine the first Preachers of the Gospel appeared before their audience with a more free

\* Rev. Robert Hall, M.A.

and unfettered air than is consistent with the narrow trammels by which, in these latter days, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The divine emotions with which they were fraught, would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions ; nor would they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos, to be weakened by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon.

“Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind ; but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart ; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument ; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sake of the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence. Let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes’ bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages, will instantly evaporate. Yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can anything

be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody."

Though it may seem quite unnecessary to add to this powerful and eloquent testimony, yet I cannot refrain from adducing the terse and judicious remarks of another distinguished Preacher on the same subject. "Our method of preaching," remarks Cecil, "is not that by which Christianity was propagated: yet the genius of Christianity is not changed. There was nothing in the primitive method set or formal. The primitive Bishop stood up, and read the Gospel, or some other portion of Scripture, and pressed on the hearers, with great earnestness and affection, a few plain and forcible truths evidently resulting from that portion of the Divine Word. We take a text, and make an oration. Edification was then the object of both speakers and hearers; and while this continues to be the object, no better method can be found. A parable, or history, or passage of Scripture, thus illustrated and enforced, is the best method of introducing truth to any people who are ignorant of it, and of setting it home with power on those who know it; and not formal, doctrinal, argumenta-

tive discourses. TRUTH and SYMPATHY are the soul of an efficacious Ministry."

But let it not be inferred from these remarks that arrangement is of little or no consequence, much less that it should be entirely discarded. To run from one extreme to an opposite extreme would not be a mark of wisdom. Discard method altogether, and the sermon will prove to be a tissue of common-places, a string of sentences without coherence, and without point. The mind both of the Preacher and hearer will be bewildered, like the traveller wandering on some vast mountain range on a misty day. No track will be visible, nor any guide posts to direct his course.

Nor let the reader of the preceding extracts suppose, for one moment, that these distinguished authors gave the slightest countenance by their own practice to the total disregard of method and arrangement. On the contrary, their discourses were generally, if not invariably, arranged with care. But it was with a view to aid, and not to shackle or trammel themselves or their hearers. Though they used method, they did not abuse it. Though they arranged and subdivided their subjects accurately, in order to prevent vagrancy of

thought, they did not bring those subdivisions prominently before their hearers, so as to exhibit to them beforehand the entire structure of the sermon.

But let Cecil speak for himself: "It is a favourite method with me," he observes, "to reduce the text to some point of doctrine. On that topic I enlarge, and then apply it. I like to ask myself, 'What are you doing? What is your aim?' I will not forestal my own views by first going to Commentators. I talk over the subject to myself; I write down all that strikes me; and then I arrange what is written. After my plan is settled, and my mind has exhausted its stores, then I would turn to some of my great Doctors, to see if I am in no error. But I find it necessary to reject many good things which the Doctors say; they will tell to no good effect in a sermon. In truth, to be effective we must draw more from nature, and less from the writings of men. We must study the book of Providence, the book of nature, the heart of man, and the book of God. We must read the history of the world. We must deal with matters of fact before our eyes."

To some orderly and methodical minds it may seem strange that a difficulty should be

ever felt by even a young Preacher in arranging his subject. But men's minds are differently constituted, and some novices, who are not destitute of ideas, are sometimes at a loss how best to dispose them in effective order.

The three principal difficulties, doubtless, which young sermon-writers severally experience are those of arrangement, language, and expression. "Some find themselves unable to make the scheme of a sermon, some are slow to clothe their ideas with words. Others again fail in giving spirit and energy to their composition. The first cannot construct the skeleton; the second cannot find the flesh and blood; the third cannot breathe into it the breath of life."\*

It is with the first of these difficulties that we are now concerned; and perhaps one of the best plans which the student can adopt with a view to facilitate his progress, is that of trying to divide a text himself, as best he may, and then to compare his own crude attempts with some well-constructed skeleton of Simeon, of Bishop Beveridge,† or of some other writer, on the same passage. In no instance should

\* Ecclesiastes Anglicanus. † Theosaurus Theologicus.

he permit his mind to be preoccupied with the thoughts suggested by any other plan than his own. Having done his best without assistance, he may then be allowed, with advantage to himself and his audience, to resort to the treasures afforded him in the writings of others.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PREACHER'S STYLE.

“Qui libenter audiunt, et magis attendunt, et facilius credunt.”—*Quintilian* viii. 3.

“Parochial preaching has a style peculiar to itself; and it is a style of some difficulty to attain.”—*Ecclesiastes Anglicanus*.

‘WHAT signifies the *style* of a sermon? If the subject be well chosen, and well treated, nothing more can be reasonably required.’ So has many a young Preacher affected to ignore the importance to be attached to a good style in the pulpit, in order to excuse his own negligence in striving to attain it. .

As well might it be asked respecting the human frame,—that noblest work of the Great Artificer,—‘What does it signify if the skeleton be clothed with the usual integuments, in what proportions, or in what manner, they are put on?’ Who knows not how important it is to



the strength, the agility, the usefulness, as well as to the appearance of the man, that all those integuments should be in harmony and proportion; that there should be no superabundance in one part, and no deficiency in another; that there should be sinews enough, and yet enough of flesh to cover them? And not only so, but that the skin itself should be comely and fair to look upon?

And is it not precisely so in the composition of a sermon? What though the framework be judiciously contrived, and the synopsis be filled in with appropriate matter, if there be a redundancy on one point, and a deficiency on another? If there be a want of muscle, or of nerve, or even of external tissue? If the argument, for instance, be defective, the similes superabundant, the discussion prolix, the pleading cold, the exhortation feeble? Or even if there be but an unseemly appearance of vulgarity and coarseness on the one hand, or of pomposity and conceit on the other, the sermon will be sure to lose something of its power, and the efforts of the Preacher be proportionably marred.

But let it not be supposed that by a good style is meant a style highly ornate, or superlatively classical and correct. Such a style

may be suitable on some peculiar occasions, or for some particular congregations. A Visitation sermon, or a sermon *ad Clerum*, or a sermon addressed to a congregation of a highly intellectual character, may be justly considered as exceptional.

Putting then all such special occasions and requirements aside, let us ask ourselves, what kind of style should be cultivated by the young Preacher, whose audience consists of a mixed multitude, the majority of whom are by no means elevated in station, or intellectual in their pursuits?

In such a situation, and under such circumstances, an elaborate, scholastic, Ciceronian, or even Johnsonian style would be quite out of character, and be worse than useless. It would, in fact, serve only to veil the meaning of the Preacher, deaden the comprehension and feeling of the majority of his hearers, and throw the whole congregation into a kind of mesmeric sleep.

And here let the author again strengthen his remarks by the testimony of one, who was not only an original thinker, remarkably judicious and abounding with good sense, but whose lot was cast, for the most part, amongst

men of literature and intelligence, in a part of the metropolis where many of the lawyers then resided. During the summer months, however, he migrated, as did his congregation, into the country, where he preached to a comparatively ignorant audience in a very different, and most appropriate style.

Let us hear, then, the testimony of Cecil. "Some men," he remarks, "have set up exorbitant notions about accuracy. But exquisite accuracy is totally lost on mankind. The greater part of those who hear cannot be brought to see the points of the accurate man. The Scriptures are not written in this manner. I should advise a young Minister to break through all such cobwebs as these unphilosophical men would spin around him. An humble and modest man is silenced, if he sees one of these critics before him. He should say, 'I am God's servant: to my own Master I stand or fall. I will labour according to the utmost ability which God giveth, and leave all consequences to Him.' . . . I honor metaphysicians, logicians, critics, and historians, in their places. But look at facts. Men who lay out their ingenious statements, preach their churches empty. . . . I dare not tell most

academical, logical, frigid men, how little I account of their opinion concerning the true method of preaching to the popular ear. They set themselves to plant principles and prove points, when they should labour to interest the heart. But after all, men will carry their natural character into their Ministry. If a man has a dry, logical, scholastic turn of mind, we shall rarely find him an interesting Preacher. One in a thousand may meet him, but not more."

There are few things perhaps more important to the formation of a good style than marking the defects and the faults which a discriminating teacher or friend might point out to us, whether in our own compositions, or in those of others. Canons and rules of art, though not to be ignored, are found to be of far less practical value than the wise counsel and judicious criticism of a competent adviser.

The Preacher's style should, if possible, be well formed before he enters on his sacred duties, which may leave him but little time, and still less inclination, for the requisite labour and thought. This theory, however, seems to be but seldom realized in practice. The majority of young Clergymen, who have

just been ordained, have to acquire their style of preaching. Their mode of thinking is scarcely yet fixed, much less their method and manner of composing sermons.

Under such circumstances they must not allow themselves to feel discouraged by the difficulties which thus meet them at the very threshold of their weekly avocation; but encourage themselves with the assurance that practice will make easy, and that their constant efforts after improvement will sooner or later be crowned with success.

“This study of language,” says a modern writer, “would appear to some persons a mere mechanical exercise, below the dignity of true genius; yet a remark by Dr. Johnson in his *Life of Addison*, shows it is a kind of exercise to which even the greatest condescend. ‘Addison’s sentences,’ he observes, ‘have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style,—familiar, but not coarse, and elegant, but not ostentatious,—must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.’ So said Johnson; yet how few readers imagine

that authors ever make a serious study of their mother tongue.

“Dr. Johnson recommended his friends to practise writing with despatch. He was himself a very rapid composer, indeed few more so, if we consider the accuracy and the weight of his compositions. ‘I wrote,’ said he, ‘the first seventy lines of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* in the course of one morning. The whole number was composed *before I committed a single couplet to writing.*’

“Robert Hall had, like Johnson, a singular facility for continuous *mental composition*. He had only to think closely on a subject, and the topics became associated with appropriate terms and phrases. Writing was a pain and fatigue to him; he had, therefore, disciplined his mind to compose without the help of his pen. He could follow out a connected chain of ideas at pleasure, and accompany them with a series of elaborately finished sentences. . . .

“We should accustom ourselves to sketch our subject less on material tablets and far more on the tablets of the mind. In this quarter lies an intellectual mine, which yet remains to be worked,—a powerful, though a dormant faculty, which, we have good reason

for saying, admits of a degree of growth and development almost incredible to those who have not seen mental composition, like mental arithmetic, fairly tried by a gradual course of systematic exercise.

“Southey’s advice on the art of composition was very similar to Johnson’s,—to think of what you have to say, and to use the first words which present themselves; for the first words will be the most natural; and *afterwards to correct* with a view to brevity and rhythm.”\*

The young Clergyman who wishes really to excel is advised also to procure a few choice volumes of sermons,—not to copy from,—but to peruse and re-peruse, with discrimination, attention, and care, marking them well, and committing to memory, if time permit, a portion of their pages, or some of the choicest passages. And let not these authors be of one particular school, much less of one particular style of thought and composition. Above all, he must carefully avoid *mannerism*, into which he will readily fall, if he restrict himself to the study of any one kind of writing. This suggestion will appear the more important when it is re-

\* Pycroft’s “Ways and Words of Men of Letters.”

collected how prone we are to copy the defects, no less than the excellences of those with whom we exclusively associate.

Many young Preachers, I feel assured, are deterred from consulting the writings of others by a vague notion that it will interfere with their being original; whereas no one can be really original, on topics connected with the pulpit, without being either a genius or a simpleton. The only species of originality which an ordinary writer of sermons can hope to attain is that which consists in putting forth no ideas except those which by thought and reflection he has inwardly digested, and made his very own, quickened, as it were, with the life of his own mind. "This," says Professor Bautain, "is called *taking possession in the finder's name*. And thus Molière, when he imitated Plautus and Terence; La Fontaine, when he borrowed from Æsop and Phædrus, were not ashamed of the practice. This condition is indispensable, if life is to be imparted to the discourse; and it is this which distinguishes the orator, who draws on his own interior resources, even when he borrows, from the actor, who impersonates, or the reader, who recites the productions of another."



But though I feel convinced that the study of the writings of the best Preachers of the day will prove the most effectual means of attaining a good style for the pulpit, I am not insensible to the value of the rules usually laid down for the guidance of the student. There are certain faults which he should be taught uniformly to shun, and certain excellences which he should be strongly urged to seek to attain.

He should be taught not to indulge himself in the use of any kind of composition, however pleasant to read, unsuitable for *oral* delivery to the particular congregation which he is called to address. Nor should he ever forget the danger to which the writers of sermons are all more or less exposed,—that of writing for the *eye*, rather than for the *ear*. Never ask yourself, ‘How would this appear in print, or bear the eye of a critical reader?’ but ‘How will it sound from the Pulpit? How is it likely with God’s blessing, to tell upon my hearers?’

With this preliminary remark thoroughly impressed upon his mind, the young Preacher or student may profitably attend to the following suggestions.

Let him cultivate

1. **CLEARNESS** of style. We read of some who "darken counsel by words without knowledge," or with words "not understood by the people." And not only should our words be easily understood, but our sentences should be so clear and pellucid, that their meaning may be seen at a glance, as pebbles at the bottom of a clear running brook.

With this view, long and involved sentences should, as much as possible, be avoided. A plain man, unaccustomed to literary pursuits, cannot easily fathom the meaning of a long and protracted paragraph or sentence.

Much indeed of obscurity of style may be traced to obscurity of thought. We should try to form in our minds clear and strong impressions of the ideas, which we wish to communicate to others. We must not rest satisfied with an idea, until we can grasp it, as it were, in our hands, and feel that it is real, and has a being that can be clearly defined. How can a man properly describe an object, which he sees only through a murky atmosphere, or a dense fog?

2. **SIMPLICITY** of style should be cultivated. There should be an absence of all affectation

of learning, of high-sounding epithets, and far-fetched illustrations. "The affectation which leads a man to sacrifice the object for which he speaks to the reputation of being an erudite scholar, or an elegant speaker, is altogether beneath the dignity of his sacred office. The practice of introducing scraps of quotations from classical authors, if carried beyond very moderate limits, even in literary compositions, is so repulsive to men of taste, that it is much less prevalent now than it was in former times. At this day pedantry in the pulpit is much more likely to show itself in exotic phrases, in far-fetched rhetorical figures, in citing the apothegms of illustrious men, and especially in obtruding upon plain hearers the names and the opinions of learned men. 'It is not difficult,' says Archbishop Usher, 'to make easy things hard; but to render hard things easy, is the hardest part of a good Preacher.' But even when there is no affectation of this sort, the habits of a cultivated mind may deceive a Preacher; and he may, imperceptibly to himself, take it for granted that his language is intelligible to his hearers because it is so to himself. . . . When a man, therefore, accustomed to the language of eru-

dition, and fresh from the University or other seat of learning, finds himself the Pastor of a country congregation, what is his duty? Not indeed to unlearn all that he has acquired, not to cease to cultivate refinement of mind and manners, but to adapt himself to the wants and requirements of his people. Like a missionary lately arrived in a new region, he must study the habits, the language, the powers of comprehension, of those among whom he is placed.”\*

Perhaps the mode said to have been adopted by Archbishop Tillotson, might be pursued with advantage by a young Preacher similarly circumstanced. Before he delivered his sermons in public, he sometimes read them to an illiterate woman of good sense, to see if she could understand him, and if not, where was the hitch.

And here I am glad to be able to quote the testimony of one as remarkable for his simplicity of style, as he is exalted in learning and in station. “Elaborate composition,” observes Archbishop Sumner, “is so far from being necessary to the success of public discourses,

\* Porter's Homiletics.

that, in many situations, a person of delicate and refined taste will be obliged to maintain a severe conflict between his duty and his habits, before he can become useful to others from the pulpit. He must descend from the high and lofty tone of language to which he is accustomed, to walk in the humble terms of Scripture. He must limit his rounded periods to the extent of vulgar comprehension. He must abound in interrogations and addresses, which the rules of composition may condemn in writing, though the rules of nature sanction them in speaking. In short he must put off all sense of personal importance, and assume the character of his office. He must forget himself, and remember only his situation as the messenger of Christ, and his business of converting sinners from the error of their way.”\*

Forty years have now elapsed since this important advice fell from the pen of the author of *Apostolic Preaching*. And well had it been for our peasantry and our mechanics, if not for the higher grades of society, had it been more universally followed by the English Clergy. That a great improvement

\* Archbishop Sumner's "Apostolic Preaching."

in this respect has taken place since that period, and especially during the last twenty years, should be acknowledged with thankfulness to that gracious God, who has made our National Church, even in these agitating and conflicting times, for "a name and a praise in the earth."

To one, who has been hitherto accustomed to converse only in the language of the schools, it will doubtless be difficult to condescend to the requirements of the illiterate. But the effort must be made and persevered in, until an object so essential to usefulness shall have been attained.

But, important as are clearness and simplicity of style, they are not all that is required to accomplish the object of a Preacher who would arrest the attention, and secure the interest of his hearers. He should cultivate

3. A LIVELY, POINTED, PICTORIAL style. He should think of the scenes, the employments, the business, the trains of thought with which his hearers are the most conversant, and enlist them into his service. By making use of these as illustrations of his meaning he will give point and interest to all he utters. What he says will not only be better understood, but

better appreciated, and more readily responded to. No illustrations can be more appropriate, more beautiful, or more telling than those which may be drawn from the every-day occurrences in the occupations of the husbandman. To doubt this assertion, would be to call in question the consummate wisdom of that Divine Teacher, who spoke as never man spake.

Surely if there be one thing rather than another which characterizes the style of our Lord's instruction, it is his uniform habit of directing the attention of his hearers to the objects by which they were surrounded, and the occupations in which they were engaged. The expansive waters of the Galilean lake, the fishermen's employment in casting their nets for a draught of fishes, or dragging them, when filled, to the sea shore,—the adjacent fields with their golden harvests ready for the sickle,—the shepherd tending his flock upon the mountain side,—the sower going forth to sow,—the labourers working for their hire, or standing in the market-place waiting to be hired,—the lily of the valley surpassing Solomon in his most costly apparel,—the wide-spreading mustard tree, in whose branches the

little birds found a lodging,—the woman leavening her three measures of meal, or seeking for her mislaid piece of silver,—the shepherd going after the lost one of his flock,—these, and such as these, are the simple, but no less touching and striking illustrations with which the Saviour taught, and on account of which “the common people heard him gladly.”

But lest this effort to gain the attention of his audience should degenerate into levity, let the young Preacher remember that his style should be characterized

4. By **SERIOUSNESS**. There is a gravity befitting the pulpit, which must never be lost sight of in our efforts to interest and please. To say anything bordering on the ludicrous, or wantonly to excite a smile in the countenances of our hearers by mirthful, or witty, or grotesque allusions, would justly subject ourselves to the charge of trifling with sacred things, or of touching the Ark with hands of unhallowed levity.

It is preposterous to plead for levity in the pulpit that it keeps up the *attention* of the congregation—an end which might be attained by still more objectionable means. That attention is worthless which is gained at the



expense of all that is sacred and decorous in the office of the Preacher. Surely of such laughter as may thus be produced, it may well be said in the language of Solomon, one of the wisest of Preachers, "It is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it?"

I will not enter into the question whether *satire* ought never to be heard from the pulpit, but I feel assured that the occasions must be very "few and far between," when the serious and judicious Preacher will feel it right to wield so dangerous a weapon. For what will be the usual result? Not conviction, but resentment. It may change indeed a man's manners, but it will never change his heart.

"It may correct a foible—may chastise  
The freaks of fashion; regulate the dress;  
But where are its sublimer trophies found?  
What vice has it subdued? whose heart reclaimed  
By rigour? Or whom laugh'd into reform?  
Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed.  
Laugh'd at—he laughs again; and stricken hard,  
Turns to the stroke his adamant scales,  
That fear no discipline of human hands."

5. The Preacher's style should be characterised by SYMPATHY.

Too many Preachers fail exceedingly here. They deliver sermons, it may be, well com-

posed, lucid, simple, pointed, and serious in their style; but not sympathetic in their tone. There is nothing to convince the audience that there is a fellow-feeling between the Preacher and themselves. He speaks of feelings and convictions, of sorrows and joys, as though he had nothing to do with such things *personally*; as though he were not a man of like passions with the weakest and meanest of his hearers. It is the assurance we have of our blessed Saviour's sympathy that so endears Him to us, both in his prophetic and priestly character. "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

It has been well said that "a clergyman's ministrations, and especially his preaching, are the connecting link between him and his people. If he really care for them, he will interest himself about their wants, and will try to meet them, and this will be sure to shew itself in his sermons. He should speak as one who knows the inner thoughts and workings of the hearts of those whom he is addressing; and he should shew that he is fully aware of and can appreciate their joys; that he is aware of their

trials, and can feel for them in their difficulties; that he desires to put himself in their place, and rejoices to be the bearer to them of the remedies they need. Our sympathy should also be shewn by an occasional allusion to local and passing events, in which the congregation may happen to be specially interested. This will sometimes have a happy effect. But it must be done in moderation, and great care should be taken to avoid such personal allusions as will cause irritation and give offence. The arrow may be so skilfully shot as to strike many consciences, but it must not be evidently aimed at any one individual.”\*

But to render preaching really efficient there must be more even than sympathy, which though it may go far to achieve a triumph over the hearts and minds of the audience, will sometimes fail through a want of energy. The people should be made to feel that the Preacher's sympathy is not the weak and inert thing, which it may sometimes appear to be, but that it is associated

6. With real EARNESTNESS. Whilst we feel with our hearers, and for them, we must

\* Oxenden's Pastoral Office.

allow no consideration whatever to enfeeble our efforts to proclaim the whole revealed counsel of God, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear.

We are to teach, preach, and admonish as those that must give account; nor must we allow ourselves to withhold anything from our hearers, which their sins, their dangers, or their infirmities may require. Whilst towards some we are to shew "compassion, making a difference;" others we must "save with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."\*

There should be an earnestness in all that we say. Our statements of doctrine; our proclamations of mercy; our invitations to the weary and heavy laden; our expostulations with the impenitent; our pleadings, our warnings, our rebukes, should all carry with them the idea that we are in *earnest*, that we believe what we say, and that we are anxious that they themselves should believe it. "Be real with them," charges one of the most eloquent of Bishops; "Strike as one that would make a dint upon their shield of hardness; yea, and smite through it to their heart of

\* St. Jude, 22.

hearts. . When you preach, be real. Set your people before you in their numbers, their wants, their dangers, their capacities, choose a subject, not to shew yourself off, but to benefit them. And then speak straight to them as you would beg your life or counsel your son, or call your friend from a burning house, in plain, strong, earnest words. And that you may be thus real, I would counsel you from the first to take as little of your sermons as possible from those of other men. Let them be your own, made up of truths learned on your knees from your Bible, in self-examination, and amongst your people.”\*

Lastly,—and incomparably above all,—the Preacher’s style should be characterized by LOVE, without which, we have the authority of an Apostle for declaring, that the loftiest kind of preaching will be worthless before God. “Though I speak,” says he, “with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not *charity*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

And here again, I would quote from one of

\* Bishop of Oxford’s Addresses to the Candidates for Ordination.

the Charges of Bishop Wilberforce to his Candidates for Ordination. "Remember that without love everything else is vain; and that it can, from its own treasure, supply everything beside which you may need. . . . The loving soul will see what his brother needs, and be able to supply it; for love is quick and true in applying remedies, and has that master power which must dwell in every healer, that it draws the sufferer to itself, instead of driving him away. There is a tenderness in love which makes its touch so light, that even the most deeply wounded will bear its handling. There is a reality about it which makes it go straight to the true point. And this will make all our Ministry, and especially our sermons, effective. Instead of the dry, wandering, unreal generalities, the fine writing, or the unmeaning repetition of phrases, which makes so many sermons so absolutely intolerable, they will be felt by those who hear them to be indeed living voices,—voices about God, voices about themselves,—as great news from the far land, as the message the weary soul wants."

For lack of this loving temper in the Preacher, how often is he carried away by his own fiery spirit, rather than by a zeal accord-

ing to knowledge! The Pastor must, at his peril, strive to be faithful to the souls committed to his charge; nor must he refrain from enforcing the solemn declarations and threatenings of God's law against the obstinate offender: but he should feel conscious of pain and disquietude in the discharge of this solemn duty, and seek to mingle love towards the person of the offender with denunciations against the offence itself. "No man," remarks Cowper, "was ever scolded out of his sins. . . A man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit."

A just picture of what a Christian Preacher ought to be in addressing his congregation, is incidentally drawn by the same poetic pen, in the person of one "for years deserving honour, but for wisdom more!"

"Gentle, and affable, and full of grace,  
As fearful of offending whom he wished  
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths  
Not harshly thundered forth, or rudely pressed,  
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PREACHER'S DELIVERY.

“Actio\* inquam in dicendo una dominatur. Sine hâc summus orator esse in numero nullo potest, mediocris hâc instructus summos sæpe superare. Huic primas dedisse Demosthenes dicitur, cum rogaretur quid in dicendo esset primum, huic secundas, huic tertias.”— *Cicero de Oratore*, III. 56.

ONE of the most important subjects connected with Preaching, is that which relates to the *delivery* of sermons. I am by no means insensible to the indifference which is frequently attached by Preachers themselves to the manner in which they deliver their discourses from the pulpit: but when I have noticed the effect

\* By which is signified *everything* connected with what we now term *delivery*, whether gesture, voice, intonation, emphasis, animation, &c.



produced by the preaching of such individuals, however distinguished for their piety, their zeal, or their talents, I have generally perceived symptoms of inattention, and a want of interest in their discourses, on the part of their congregations. It is mortifying indeed to think how many excellent sermons, fraught with wisdom, and piety, with depth of argument, and beauty of style, are vainly scattered, as it were, to the winds, every Sunday in the year, for want of that attention to their delivery from the pulpit, which alone can ensure the attention of the hearers.

It is quite irrelevant to plead the doctrine of human corruption, and the alienation of the natural heart from God, and thus to account for the inattention of a congregation. That corruption and that alienation remain precisely the same, whether they are addressed in a lively, natural, energetic manner, or in a manner exactly the reverse: but whilst in the latter case they will generally be found inattentive and indifferent, in the former they will appear to be interested, and alive to the subject. God works by *means*, and generally by the means best adapted to the end. He makes use of the talents with which He endows

his ministering servants ; and if of the talent of *composing*, why not of the equally important talent of *delivering* a discourse ? “ Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But how shall they hear without a Preacher,” who studies to make himself heard, and to deliver his message in a manner calculated at once to awaken and rivet their attention ?

Many of the following observations, it is obvious, should be reduced to practice, if possible, *before* the sacred student assumes the character and station of a Preacher. It is with *delivery* as with *composition*, there should be previous discipline and preparation. As in the one case the style should be already formed so as to require little or no attention from the writer, whilst expressing his thoughts on paper, so in the other, a happy and vigorous species of elocution, should be attained before the Preacher ascends the pulpit, where he must become absorbed at once with the grandeur and importance of his subject. It happens, however, in numerous instances, that young men enter on the work of the Ministry without having had their attention at all directed to this subject, and in consequence they not only

feel a considerable embarrassment in the pulpit, but frequently fall into an unnatural, and to say the least, an uninteresting manner of addressing their audience.

Unhappily the study of elocution is not only unprovided for in the preparatory exercises of Candidates for Orders, but even labours under a considerable degree of reproach which it by no means deserves. Hence it has become almost a proverb, that 'the English Clergy are the best writers of sermons, and the worst readers of them in all Christendom.' This censure is doubtless much exaggerated, as antithetical proverbs usually are: yet it is very certain that our country is not remarkable for general eloquence, and that in the Church it is less visible than either in the Senate or at the Bar. Much of the disesteem in which the cultivation of this useful talent is held, arises from a false supposition that by eloquence is meant an affected and artificial manner of speaking: or, what is worse, the mere trick of 'making the worse appear the better reason,' by the blandishments of a meretricious oratory. From such eloquence may we ever be preserved! But the eloquence which arises from an appropriate unsophisticated mode of speak-

ing—and which not merely tunes the organ of speech to an agreeable modulation, but allows the speaker to follow the dictates of nature in reciting energetically what he feels strongly—deserves to be assiduously cultivated.

Another current, and far more weighty objection to the cultivation of just elocution by young men intended for the sacred profession, is, that it is inconsistent with the simplicity and sincerity of their vocation as Ministers of Christ. St. Paul is often quoted as an authority to decide this question; and because he abjured “the enticing words of man’s wisdom,” and “determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ, and him crucified;” it is argued, that the rules of forcible composition and just enunciation are unbecoming the study of a Christian teacher? But it is very clear, that the reprobation expressed by the Apostle was levelled at that spurious oratory which prevailed both among the Greeks and the Romans at the time when he wrote, and has nothing to do with a sober view of the present question. “Many of the classic rhetoricians, it is well known, taught little else than dialectic subtlety and sophistry: too often they instructed their pupils how to speak either

for or against a question, without any reference to truth or moral feeling; and were content with the triumph of their art, independently of any valuable end to be obtained by its exertion. It was against *such* practices that the great Apostle of the Gentiles so zealously remonstrated. Very different was his own style of eloquence, "not with wisdom of words," but "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Yet who was a greater master of *true* eloquence? Who knew better how to 'convince and persuade?' Who felt his subject more deeply, or knew how to convey his conceptions more forcibly to others? " \*

But while I feel the importance of directing the attention of the young Preacher to a subject too frequently neglected and contemned by those whom it chiefly concerns, I almost shrink from the delicate and difficult task of offering suitable direction and advice. It is in vain, however, to wish that the task had fallen into abler hands, and that the grave propounder had been at the same time, the successful exemplar of his rules. I cannot pretend to construct any new system of instruction, or to

\* Wilkes's Correlative Claims.

enter into any elaborate discussion. The utmost at which I aim, is to offer a few practical directions which occur to me as the result of my reading, my observation of other Preachers, and my own experience during a Ministry of many years' standing.

There are four principal ways in which a sermon may be delivered, each of which has its several advocates, and possesses its respective advantages and disadvantages. These are

From MANUSCRIPT;

EXTEMPORANEOUSLY;

From NOTES;

MEMORITER.

On each of these modes of delivery a few observations may be profitably made; but more especially on the *first*, as being not only the most frequently employed, but the most suggestive of practical hints with reference to the three other modes.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DELIVERY FROM MANUSCRIPT.

THOUGH, as we shall soon have occasion to remark, the *preaching* of a written sermon includes far more than the mere *reading* of it, yet good reading is essential to its being properly delivered.

The first direction, then, which I would give, is of a preliminary, but most important character, viz. *that pains should be taken to acquire the art, and cultivate the habit, of*  
READING WELL.

To read in silence, so as to understand the meaning of an author and thereby to increase our intellectual stores, is one thing; to read aloud, so as to unfold that meaning, and communicate that knowledge to our hearers with perspicuity and force, is another. The former is an *attainment*, which is almost universal; the latter

is possessed by comparatively few. But while the number who can aspire to read remarkably well, involving as it does a rare combination of physical and mental qualifications, will always be small, there is no room for discouragement. Between mediocrity and perfection there is a wide interval, in which various degrees of excellence may be attained by the diligent and observant student. There are not wanting many valuable treatises on the art, among which may be specially mentioned those of Sheridan, Walker, and Cull. But written rules alone will not suffice ; there must be added the example of a 'living voice.' Let the young student then notice and remember the manner in which a good reader proceeds.

Let him mark the distinctness of his articulation, the propriety of his emphasis, the correctness of his pronunciation, the ease and force with which he completes every sentence which drops from his lips. Then, if he possesses a tolerable ear, he will be able to enter with intelligence and interest into the written directions of the rhetorician. A considerable part of the task of learning to read well, will be found to consist in *unlearning* to read *ill*. Bad habits, begun probably in the nursery,



increased at school, and perpetuated at the University, are like a threefold cord, not easily broken. Before, indeed, the attempt can be made, the individual must become acquainted with his own peculiar faults. Let him seek then to have them pointed out to him while he is young—while his organs of speech are pliable, and his habits have not yet assumed the character of a second nature.

With this view he should request some judicious friend to remind him, from time to time, of any impropriety into which he may fall when he reads before him in public or in private. 'Tell me,' he should say, 'not only when I fail to convey to you the true meaning of my author, but every instance in which I pronounce a word improperly, or lay a false emphasis. Mark also my tones and inflexions, my pauses and pitch of voice, and fail not to apprise me in every instance of what appears unnatural, or stiff, or feeble, or affected.' His friend's compliance with such requests as these will prove, perhaps, at first, a source of considerable surprise, if not of some little mortification; for, strange as it may seem, while few men read well, there are still fewer who think they read ill: and none are commonly so un-

conscious of their imperfections as those in whom they most abound. But let him not be discouraged by the long catalogue which may be presented to him of his rhetorical delinquencies: 'to understand the disease is more than half the cure.' Let him proceed at once to the necessary task of eradicating every fault which has been pointed out to him, and of supplying every defect. By the exercise of vigilant self-inspection and persevering efforts, in compliance with the rules of some well written work on Elocution, he will, in all probability, soon acquire the ability to read comparatively well.

But let him not suppose when he has arrived at a considerable measure of excellence in the art of *reading*, that he has nothing more to acquire with a view to pulpit delivery. True, it is an important, not to say, indispensable preliminary; but it is only a preliminary. Reading is not preaching. A sermon may be read from the pulpit with much propriety and correctness; there may be no false quantities, nor provincial accents, nor erroneous emphasis; the tones may be agreeable, the inflexions correct, the harmony of every sentence carefully preserved; and yet, after all, the sermon may not have been

*preached*, it may not have conveyed for one moment the idea suggested by the term employed by our Lord and his Apostles, κηρυγμα, a proclamation, a message of importance from a Sovereign to his people. The distinction is not between the delivery of *written* and *unwritten* discourses, but between the mere *reading* of a written sermon, and the *preaching* of a written sermon. An *extempore* discourse may be as remote from preaching, as the tamest and most uninteresting reading of one previously composed: for if there be no life-stirring sympathy between the words and affections of the speaker, it is at best but the cold essay of a fluent tongue. The Preacher is a κήρυξ, an ambassador, a herald; and he bears with him tidings in which he is most deeply and intimately concerned, in common with those to whom he announces them; hence, whether his sermon be written or unwritten, he *preaches* it; he proclaims it; he publishes it abroad with corresponding life and energy. There is, in short, a *reality* in the matter, to which mere reading, however excellent or even faultless, cannot attain. The Preacher must convey his discourse, not from his manuscript merely, nor from the tablet of a retentive

memory, but from an enlightened and approving understanding,—from a heart warm with love to Him from whom he receives the tidings, and to those to whom he conveys them. With this view he should make special preparation for the pulpit every time he is called upon to enter it. It is not enough that he prepare a suitable *discourse*, whether written or unwritten; he must prepare *himself* also to deliver it in a suitable manner.

He should endeavour, in the first place, to make himself perfectly familiar with what he has written, by reading it over several times, and so far to fix it in his memory, as to free himself from that slavish dependence upon his manuscript, which would keep his eye continually fixed upon its pages.

In the next place he should endeavour to get his heart deeply interested in the truths which he is thus prepared to promulgate: he should ‘mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,’ with a view to his own spiritual edification. He should adopt, in short, the laudable practice of Philip Henry, who invariably preached every sermon to himself in private, before he ventured to preach it in public to his congregation.

It is scarcely necessary perhaps to add, in the third place, that *devout prayer*, for the special blessing of God to accompany his efforts, should always precede his entrance into the pulpit. The uniform experience of Christian Ministers goes to prove the truth of the testimony "*benè prædicasse est benè orasse.*" Of many of the most eminent Preachers whose lives have been handed down to posterity, it is recorded that they loved to pass at once from the closet to the pulpit,—from pleading with God, to pleading with immortal souls.

Thus prepared, as it respects both himself and his subject, he may humbly but confidently rely on the blessing of God, and enter the pulpit in the spirit of one commissioned from on high to "stand between the living and the dead." And there let him again lift up his heart in ejaculatory prayer during the few moments which precede the announcement of his text, that he may be freed from that "fear of man which bringeth a snare," and from that love of human praise, which would mar the costliest offering which could be presented to an omniscient and heart-searching God.

In the announcement of his text, the

Preacher should be deliberate and distinct: and in a similar manner he should, for the most part, commence his sermon. There should be a sensible pause also between the announcement of the text and the opening of the discourse, not only for the purpose of giving time to the congregation to refer to the passage in the sacred volume, but also to avoid all appearance of precipitancy and haste. Few things indeed are more important to be guarded against at the commencement of a sermon than an agitated or hurried manner, for nothing tends more effectually to raise in the minds of the audience a suspicion that there is no depth of feeling, or of thought in the Preacher—that his object is rather to get through his sermon than to enlighten their understandings or affect their hearts. He should both be, and *appear* to be, deeply impressed with the importance of his subject, and should enter upon it in a calm and becoming manner.

Much of this hurried appearance is doubtless to be attributed to a constitutional nervousness of temperament; but in most cases it may be effectually overcome by persevering

efforts. Self-possession, though natural to some, may to a certain degree be attained by all. The best spiritual remedy is that suggested by Mr. Cecil, who was wont to say, "that a realizing sense of the Divine Presence would annihilate a large congregation, and ennoble a small one."

During the exordium, the pitch of his voice should be rather lower than that which is to characterize the rest of the sermon; only let him take care to be sufficiently loud to be distinctly heard by the whole of the assembly. This is the more necessary to be observed, inasmuch as the voice has a natural tendency to rise to a higher pitch as the speaker proceeds with his discourse.

"Besides, should the Speaker force his voice in the beginning, it will be presently rendered hoarse, broken, exhausted, and it will speedily fail him. You must speak neither too loudly nor too fast at first; or else the rapid expansions and contractions of the language force it and falsify it. You must husband your voice at starting in order that it may last and maintain itself to the end. When you gradually strengthen and animate it, it does not give

way, but remains clear, strong, and pleasing to the close of your harangue.”\*

And here it may be remarked, that much of the comfort, both of Preacher and hearers, will depend throughout on the proper pitch and management of the voice. There are three distinct scales, or gradations of voice, which every one may notice in himself and others,—the high, the low, and the middle. The high pitch is employed when we speak, or rather shout, to a person at a considerable distance from us. The low pitch, on the contrary, is directed towards those in immediate contact with us, and approaches almost to a whisper. Between these extremes is that most agreeable and ample range of voice which may be called the middle pitch, and out of the boundaries of which the Preacher should seldom, if ever, permit himself to stray. It is in fact that division or scale of voice, which is the vehicle of our ordinary conversation in the social circle, and which admits of the utmost variety, not only of tone and inflection, but of softness and strength. “It is erroneous to suppose that the highest pitch of voice is requisite to be well

\* Bautain.



heard by a large assembly. This is confounding two things materially different, loudness, or strength of sound, with the key-note of which we speak. The voice may be rendered louder without altering the key; and the speaker will always be able to give most body—most persevering force of sound—to that pitch of voice to which in conversation he is accustomed; whereas, if he begin on the highest pitch of his voice, he will fatigue himself, and speak with pain; and whenever a man speaks with pain, he is always heard with pain by his audience. To the voice, therefore, may be given full strength and swell of sound, but it should always be pitched on the ordinary speaking key. A greater quantity of voice should never be uttered, than can be afforded without pain, and without any extraordinary effort. To be well heard, it is useful for a speaker to direct his eyes occasionally to some of the most distant persons in the assembly, and to consider himself as speaking to them. We naturally and mechanically express our words with such a degree of strength as to be heard by one to whom we address ourselves, provided he be within the reach of our voice. This will be the case in public speaking, as

well as in common conversation. But it must be remembered that speaking too loud is peculiarly offensive. The ear is wounded when the voice comes upon it in rumbling, indistinct masses: besides, it appears as if assent were demanded by mere vehemence and force of sound. Distinctness of articulation is far more conducive to being well heard and clearly understood, than mere loudness of sound." "Articulation," observes Bautain, "should be neat, clear, sharp, yet unexaggerated, or else it will become heavy, harsh, and hammer-like, rendering the ear." "The quantity of sound requisite to fill even a large space, is less than is generally supposed; and, with distinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it extend further than the strongest voice can reach without it. This, therefore demands peculiar attention. Many instances occur in common life, of people, who, though hard of hearing, prefer to be spoken to with a moderate than a loud tone of voice. The speaker must give every sound which he utters its due proportion, and make every syllable to be heard distinctly. To succeed in this, a rapidity of pronunciation must be avoided. To pronounce with a proper degree of slowness, and with full

and clear articulation, cannot be too industriously studied, or too earnestly recommended. Such a pronunciation gives wings and dignity to language. It assists the voice by the pauses and rests which it permits it more easily to make, and enables the speaker to swell all his sounds both with more energy and more music. He may by this means also preserve a due command over himself, and avoid that flutter of spirits produced by a rapid and hurried manner which is destructive to all due impression on the minds of the audience.”\*

“Every voice has its natural bell-tone, which makes it a bass voice, a tenor, or a soprano, each with intermediate gradations. The middle voice, or tenor, is the most favourable for speaking. It is that which maintains itself the best, and which reaches the furthest when well articulated. It is also the most pleasing, the most endearing, and has the largest resources for inflection; because, being in the middle of the scale, it rises or sinks with greater ease, and leans itself better to either hand. It therefore commands a greater variety of intonations which hinders monotony of elocution, and re-

\* Blair's Rhetoric.

awakens the attention of the hearer, so prone to doze.”\*

But one of the worst, and at the same time most common faults, against which the Preacher should sedulously guard, is *monotony*. A uniform sameness of tone in the delivery of a sermon, will infallibly weaken, if not destroy the attention of the most devout audience, and if the attention be lost, all will be lost. Displeasing as eccentricity of manner doubtless is, it is by no means so injurious to a Preacher’s usefulness, as that decent and respectable, but dull and soporific monotony, which inspires indeed no disgust, but awakens, at the same time, no one emotion of the mind. Surely any kind of delivery which is not absolutely repulsive, and which keeps up the attention of the audience, is preferable to the most pleasing and gentle tone, which, by its unvarying uniformity, lulls to sleep.

It is consoling, however, to know that this cardinal fault may in every case be corrected, where vigilance and resolution are put in exercise. The speaker has only to ask himself the question from time to time, ‘With what

\* Bautain.

tone, or in what manner should I naturally utter this sentiment in *serious conversation* with a friend?' This is precisely the tone, and for the most part the manner which become also the pulpit. Nothing is more mistaken than the notion, that in the delivery of our sermons, our ordinary mode of speaking is to be abandoned, and that we are to assume some plaintive, stately, or pompous tone, which is at once unnatural to us, and uninteresting to our hearers. In extempore preaching, there is considerably less danger of falling into this error; and hence the principal cause of its acknowledged superiority in awakening attention. But why should the written sermon be allowed to operate so unfavourably on the tone and manner of the Preacher? Why should he regard his manuscript as anything more than a remembrancer, or fail to realize the thought that he is not reading an essay with which he has no concern, but conveying to his hearers his own sentiments and feelings with as much truth and reality, and heartfelt sincerity, as can possibly be felt by the most extemporaneous Preacher.

The same general direction will be found applicable to most other faults in the delivery of sermons from the pulpit, and equally service-

able in assisting the Preacher to attain the manner most natural and easy to himself. For after all the rules which the elocutionist and rhetorician can devise, there is no one direction so material to the improvement of the speaker as this, of forming the tones and inflexions of public speaking upon those of sensible and animated conversation. Most men when engaged in speaking with others on subjects of mutual interest, will give utterance to their sentiments in the tones and cadences of natural eloquence. Let the Preacher then bear in mind that, whether he is discussing a topic of considerable interest in his own parlour, in the company of a few friends, or addressing a large assembly from the pulpit, he still *speaks*, and should preserve the manner and appearance of speaking, and the tones and modulations of voice which are natural to him. How much of the propriety, the force, and the interest of a discourse must depend on such modulations, will appear from this single consideration, that to almost every sentiment we utter, and to every emotion we profess to feel, nature has adapted some peculiar tone of voice; insomuch that he who without that corresponding tone should tell another, that he was grieved or anxious, or

displeased, or afraid, would be so far from being believed, that he would probably be considered as speaking ironically. Sympathy is one of the most powerful principles by which persuasive discourse is made instrumental in operating on the human mind. The speaker endeavours to infuse into the minds of his hearers his own sentiments and emotions: which he can never be successful in doing, unless he utters them in such a manner as to convince the audience that he feels them. The proper expression of tones, therefore, deserves to be attentively considered by every one who aims, with the blessing of God, to be a successful pleader with immortal souls.\*

Much also of the force of delivery will depend upon the judicious use of *pauses*, of which there are two kinds. The first, or ordinary pause, is that which takes place at the close of

\* "In all cases, whatever be the scale of the voice—bass, tenor, or soprano—what most wins upon the hearers is what may be called a *sympathetic voice*. The best way in which a speaker can impart to his voice the sympathetic power, even when he may happen not to have it naturally, is to express vividly whatever he says, and consequently to feel it well himself, in order to make others feel it. Above all, the way is, to have great benevolence, great charity in the heart, and to love to put them in practice; for nothing gives more of sympathy to the voice than real goodness."—*Bautain*.

divisions, paragraphs, sentences, or even parts of sentences, with a view to the sense. The other, or extraordinary pause, is used in an arbitrary manner before certain emphatic words, depending altogether for its success upon the taste and judgment of the speaker.

The pause to be observed at the close of a general head or division of a discourse should be of considerable length. Two important purposes will be answered by it: the attention of the hearer will be recruited by a short but complete repose; and the continuity of sound having been broken, the Preacher will be able to descend with greater ease into the ordinary pitch of his voice, should he have previously risen to a higher elevation, or have closed the preceding division in a declamatory or pathetic strain.

On the subject of *action*, or *gesture*, little more need be said than that it should be natural and simple. The delivery of written sermons obviously admits of less action than extempore preaching; but it is far from prohibiting it altogether. Awkwardness, affectation, and excess, are the three dangers to be shunned. The Preacher should for the most part, stand erect in the pulpit: it is at once the most



natural and dignified posture, and at the same time the most conducive to the proper management of his voice and manner. He should carefully guard against the awkward habit of raising and lowering the head, simultaneously with the action of the eyes, in glancing at the manuscript before him. Few things tend more powerfully than this to give the delivery of a sermon the air and appearance of mere *reading*, and to divest it altogether of the character of preaching. Necessity requires that in the use of a manuscript, the eyes should be withdrawn from time to time to the cushion; but in no other respect should he permit his delivery to be less natural or interesting than that of the extempore speaker.

To the few simple rules which I have thus ventured to suggest, with a view to assist my younger brethren in the ministry in their laudable endeavours to obtain an unexceptionable and forcible delivery, I would add one caution. I would earnestly warn every one against giving way to the too frequent consequence of discouragement—the abandonment of all attempts at improvement. A rigid attention to rules will at first, doubtless, be irksome and unpleasant; it will distract probably the attention of the

young preacher from subjects in themselves of far greater importance. But this will only be for a short time: what is at first distracting and constrained, becomes, after a little practice, natural and free. Perseverance will be found, with God's blessing, to overcome every ordinary obstacle; and good delivery will become so habitual, that instead of proving detrimental to the spirituality of the Preacher, it will rather tend to promote it. He will experience fresh delight in his pulpit duties, and by observing the increased and increasing attention of his hearers, he will be stimulated with stronger desires to benefit their souls.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EXTEMPORANEOUS DELIVERY.

A DISTINCTION should be carefully noted between an extemporaneous sermon and a sermon extemporaneously delivered. A purely extemporaneous sermon, (which implies the absence of all previous preparation,) would be highly objectionable, except under very peculiar circumstances. Bishop Burnet, for instance, is said to have been suddenly called upon to preach before an assembly of English Prelates, on the non-arrival of the expected Preacher, and to have acquitted himself admirably on the trying emergency. It was the call of Providence, and he was justified by the result in promptly responding to it. And occasionally perhaps, in most Clergymen's lives, circumstances may arise to require them to preach with little or no preparation.

There may be found also among so numerous a body as that of the English Clergy a few highly-gifted men, who can abstract, concentrate, and arrange their thoughts in a few moments, so as to prepare a well-digested discourse for delivery, in an incredibly short space of time. And not only so, but with well stored minds, a fervid imagination, and a ready command of the most appropriate language, they feel not the slightest difficulty in pouring forth their impromptu conceptions from the pulpit with all the fervour of a glowing eloquence.

But these men are rare, and their astonishing achievements are not to be quoted in favour of the attempt to preach purely extemporaneous sermons.

In offering, then, a few special hints on the delivery of sermons extemporaneously, (for much of the advice given in the preceding chapter will be applicable here,) I shall take for granted that the sermon will have been previously planned at least, if not fully written out. Only it must be borne in mind that the composition must neither be read, nor repeated from memory, in the pulpit; otherwise it cannot be said to be *extemporaneously* delivered. The outline, the structure, the concatenation of

ideas, may be laid up in the memory, but not the words. The language must be sought for at the time of delivery ; or rather it will come readily of its own accord to every one who is properly qualified to preach extemporaneously. And this observation suggests to me my first hint to the young aspirant, in the form of a preliminary question. Has he the requisite qualification of a ready utterance? If not, let him seek at once to attain it, before he presumes to inflict upon a congregation the lame and faltering efforts of a stammering tongue. 'What then,' he will ask, 'are the steps which I should take in order to attain it?' The rules recommended by competent advisers are various. Professor Bautain\* recommends the frequent recital of the finest passages of great writers, both in prose and poetry, at moments of leisure, or during a solitary walk, when the mind so readily falls back upon its own resources.

Lord Brougham lays great stress upon embracing every opportunity, however trivial, of giving utterance to our ideas, in the best language we can find at the moment. In a

\* Art of Extemporary Speaking.

celebrated letter of that great orator on the education of a young lawyer,\* he says: "The beginning of the art is to acquire the habit of easy speaking; and in whatever way this can be had, (which individual inclination or accident will generally direct, and may safely be allowed to do so), it must be had. Now I differ from all other Doctors of Rhetoric in this;—I say, let him first of all learn to speak easily and fluently, as well and sensibly as he can, no doubt; but, at any rate, let him learn to speak. This is to eloquence or good public speaking, what the being able to talk, in a child, is to correct grammatical speech. It is the requisite foundation, and on it you must build. Moreover, it can only be acquired young; therefore let it by all means, and at any sacrifice, be got hold of forthwith.... The next step is the grand one, to convert this kind of easy speaking into chaste eloquence. And here there is but one rule. I do earnestly entreat your son to set daily and nightly before him, the Greek models. . . . His taste will improve every time he reads and repeats to himself, and he will learn how

\* The late Lord Macaulay.

much may be done by a skilful use of a few words," &c.

Bishop Burnet, whose facility in extemporaneous Preaching has already been referred to, gives the following advice to the young Divine. "Let him talk freely *to himself* on subjects suited to the pulpit, and study to give his thoughts all the heat and flight about them that he can. By a very few years' practice of *two or three soliloquies a day*, (chiefly in the morning, when the head is clearest, and the spirits are liveliest) a man will contract great readiness both in thinking and speaking."\*

The celebrated American orator, Henry Clay, is said to have attained his proficiency by similar means. And his success is the more remarkable from his not having commenced his studies till comparatively late in life. He then began and continued for years the process of *daily reading and speaking* upon the contents of some historical or scientific books.

Somewhat similar also was the early practice of Sir Samuel Romilly, as we learn from a statement in one of his letters. "Above all," says he, "I was anxious to acquire a great

\* Bp. Burnet's Pastoral Care.

facility of elocution, which I thought indispensably necessary to my success. Instead, however, of resorting to any of those debating societies, which were at that time much frequented, I adopted a very useful expedient, which I found suggested in Quintilian—that of expressing myself in the best language I could, whatever I had been reading; in using the arguments I had met with in Tacitus or Livy, and making with them speeches of my own—not uttered, but composed, and existing only in thought. Occasionally, too, I attended the two Houses of Parliament, and used myself to recite in thought, or to answer the speeches I had heard<sup>d</sup> there.”

Contemporaneously, however, with the adoption of methods such as these in private, the young Preacher may pursue a course of extemporaneous speaking in certain situations in public, with every possible advantage both to himself and his hearers. He has only to resort to the cottage—the sick chamber—the school room—and there with the Bible in his hand, and with the love of Christ and of souls in his heart, to expound the Scriptures, or speak of the great truths of Religion. In such places, and in such employment, he will acquire, if anywhere,



variety of exposition, and the multiplicity of representations. Once sure of the leading idea, the divisions, and subdivisions must be rapidly inspected. You must proceed from the one to the other reflectively in order to test what they will be worth at the decisive instant, and to penetrate them by a glance of the mind—a glance which is never more vigorous than at the last moment.”

The fourth and concluding hint which I would suggest to the young Preacher who wishes really to excel, is, that he should study to avoid the faults into which extempore Preachers are more or less prone to fall. He should be especially careful to guard against tediousness, diffuseness, and tautology. He must bear in mind that the audience will probably become weary before he himself is satisfied—that whilst he is still fresh, and desirous to continue his speech, they may be counting the minutes, and wishing him to come to a close. Though a little more indulgence may be shewn towards a sermon delivered extemporaneously, patience must have its limits; and on few occasions should the Preacher exceed thirty-five minutes. If he wishes indeed to keep up the attention of

his hearers at all times, let him restrict himself for the most part to half an hour.

Even in Courts of Law, where there is often so much to keep up the attention of the audience, the advantage of brevity is felt by the Barrister in his pleadings. Take as an illustration the following testimony of Sir James Scarlett, when practising at the English Bar: When he was asked, on one occasion by Mr. Gurney, what was the secret of his great success as an advocate, he replied, that he took care to press home the one principle point of the case, without much regard to the other points. He also said that he knew the secret of being short. 'I find,' said he, 'when I exceed half an hour, I am always doing mischief to my client. If I drive into the heads of the Jury important matters, I drive out matter more important, which I had previously lodged there.'

And as an illustration of a similar effect on the minds of an audience, oftentimes as dense as an empannelled Jury in a plebeian case, take the following. 'Sir,' said a poor parishioner to his worthy Pastor: 'you divided your sermon into three parts. Well,—I had the first part pretty well in my head, and then came the second part; and while I was trying

to mind that too, on comes the third part and puts them both out.'

But I must not conclude these observations without endeavouring to reply to the inquiry so frequently, and sometimes so anxiously put by the young Preacher:—'To which do you give the preference, to written or to unwritten sermons?' It seems, however, impossible to give to the question a positive or specific answer at once. Our opinion must, in every instance, be regulated by the circumstances of the case. We must ascertain not only the qualifications of the Preacher, but the requirements also of the congregation. A young man who might not be justified in preaching extemporaneously in one pulpit, might do so in another pulpit with the greatest possible advantage to himself, and to his audience. And in a similar manner he might advantageously give an expository Lecture extemporaneously, on a week-day evening, to a few plain devout people, and yet shrink, very properly, from preaching an unwritten sermon before a large mixed congregation on the Sunday.

But in order to assist the Inquirer in coming to a decision, I think I cannot do better *than* quote the judicious observations of

the late Chancellor Raikes, in his remarks on Clerical Education. They are the remarks of one of the wisest and most accomplished men of his day,—and they shew with much fairness and sound discrimination the relative advantages and disadvantages of extempore preaching.

“One thing,” he observes, “seems certain, that though the power of Preaching extempore may probably, in some degree, be gained by all, it is acquired with much greater facility by some men than by others; and that if there is one talent which, more than another, deserves to be considered as a gift, it is this. Learning will not produce it: knowledge, imagination, reasoning powers, warmth of feeling, piety, and all the qualities which seem essential to ministerial usefulness, may be possessed in a very considerable degree, and still, if they are not compounded in a manner which it is not for man to specify or describe, they may fail in producing this result, and impede, rather than facilitate the power which is wished for. To some men, it seems to come with a sort of spontaneous ease which we are unable to account for. In the case of others, not inferior to them in any quality which may seem essential to the faculty, it is laboured for, and laboured for in

vain. The thoughts rise too rapidly, or too slowly: the feelings are too weak to give force to the delivery, or so strong that they obstruct it; the imagination is too fertile or barren; and the mind which can reason powerfully and conclusively in the retirement of the closet, loses all self-possession in public, through the weakness of a nervous temperament, or the diffidence of extreme humility. In a case like this, it would be unjust to impose one only method for all, where the state of none was the same; or to lay down one system to which every intellect and every character should be formed. That each system has its advantage, the most zealous advocates of either are found to concede. And since it seems impossible that all should adopt one plan with equal facility, or practise it with equal success, it seems best to advise, that each taking the line to which the peculiar frame of his mind directs him, should labour to excel in the manner which is most natural to him, without aiming at any laborious eminence in that for which he feels no bias.

“Each, however, should bear in mind the failing to which his peculiar method is most exposed, and be on his guard against it. The

Preacher who writes his sermons must remember, that compositions prepared in the study are apt to come out in the language of the study, too learned, too refined, too elevated, for common hearers; and he should labour to obtain clearness of statement and simplicity of language. Those sermons also which are written in retirement, are naturally apt to be deficient in animation; they become essays rather than addresses, and as such, are too often systematic, cold, and unimpassioned. This evil must be met by awakening, even in the closet, the feelings of one who stands as the Minister of God, and who sees the eternal interests of his hearers at stake; it must be met by a spirit of Christian love, excited by prayer and meditation. The danger which still remains, of coldness, must be avoided by warmth and fervour in delivery; nor can we doubt that, by God's blessing on exertions such as these, all the peculiar evils of written compositions might be obviated, and as large a measure of usefulness be obtained as it is possible to hope for.

“Nor must the extempore Preacher forget that his style is still more exposed to danger, though the voice of public feeling may speak strongly in its favour. That facility of utter-

ance which probably decides his choice as to the line of preaching he adopts, too often leads him to forget the necessity of previous study and preparation for the pulpit. The apparent success of his Ministry seems a convincing proof of the power which accompanies it. The crowds which are attracted are considered as seals, which it would be incredulity to doubt; and while fluency of speech and an animated enunciation of certain great truths, continue to secure their attendance, no doubt arises as to the blessing under which he is labouring, or the sufficiency of the Gospel which he preaches. But during all this time his hearers may only have been attracted to the talent which dazzled them, not converted to the truth as it is in Jesus. Their impressions may have been lively, but not deep nor abiding; their views of the Gospel may have been strong, but neither full nor consistent; and after several years of brilliant display and general admiration, he may find that his congregation is drawn away to some newer and more attractive rival, or falling into inconsistencies of doctrine or practice which affect the very integrity of their faith. Knowing that such may be the case, and often has been so, let the extempore

Preacher remember, that the gift in which he glories, was not given to supersede the necessity of study, of meditation, of laborious cultivation of his mental powers, but to assist in their development, and to contribute to their usefulness. Like the gift of tongues in Apostolic times, it is the most specious, but it is also the most illusive quality in the Preacher: and though, when properly employed and discreetly used, it may be a powerful instrument of good, he must never lose sight of its real nature, nor cease to consider it merely as an instrument which depends on other qualities for the good which it is to produce.

“But while there are some advantages to be named on this side, let not any one to whom God does not seem to have granted the qualities essential to it, be tempted to despondency on that account. Some of those individuals whom the grace of God has made eminently and widely useful, have never seen fit to adopt the practice. Their heart has spoken through the medium of their pen; and the feeling with which they delivered in the pulpit, what had been prepared in the closet, has rescued their ministrations from the charge of coldness and languor.

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“Let but a sermon be prepared under the influence of prayer; let it be but aimed at the souls of men, and be delivered from a heart overflowing with love to those who are addressed, and the difference will be small, whether it lies on paper before the Preacher, or is only lodged in the recesses of his mind. Its final success depends upon the grace of God; and that grace will generally accompany the most faithful labours and the most earnest prayers, whatever may have been the mode in which they have been exerted.

“Nor should we forget to bear in mind, that those evils which seem to belong to written sermons, may be more easily detected and avoided, while those which belong to the extempore mode, seem inherent in the system itself. The present practice of the Scottish church is strongly in favour of the adoption of written discourses; and if extempore addresses are best calculated to produce *effect*, it is probable that *edification* will be more generally promoted by those which are written.

“At all events, the dangers connected with extempore preaching are so many, and so obvious, that it should never be attempted by those

who are perhaps the most disposed to adopt it, by the young, the warm, and the inexperienced. It should be deferred till the judgment has gained maturity, till the mind has been enriched with a large variety of knowledge, and till some security has been gained by these acquirements against the dangers of sameness and precipitancy."

## CHAPTER IX.

### DELIVERY FROM NOTES.

THIS is obviously a medium plan, lying midway between preaching from a fully written manuscript, and preaching “extempore” as popularly understood. And it is obvious that in proportion to the length and fulness of the notes, and the use that is made of them in the pulpit, will the preaching approximate severally to the one or the other.

Some Preachers have accustomed themselves to the use of very full and lengthened notes in the pulpit,—reading them *in extenso* and filling up certain gaps and spaces extemporaneously. The notes would in this case resemble very much in length and fulness the *Horæ Homileticæ* of Simeon, in distinction from his first five hundred “skeletons.”

Habit may remove some of the many difficulties which seem inherent in this method; but I fully accord with the sentiments expressed by another writer in his remarks upon what he terms "a semi-extemporaneous style." "If any one," he observes, "finds this mode most suitable to his powers, he is right to adopt it. But I never met with one who seemed to me to preach so impressively in this way, as others whose sermons are either entirely written, or entirely extemporaneous. Yet I have often observed an occasional off-hand remark made very happily. Thus Bishop Hall says: 'In my poor and plain fashion I penned every word, in the same order as I hoped to deliver it, although in the expression I listed not to be a slave of syllables.' I think this better than the premeditated extemporizing of a part of the sermon. When a part is written, and a part extemporaneous, the inherent faults of the two styles appear more plainly by the contrast: the former appears formal, the latter, vague and loose. I may, however, possibly have been unfortunate in the specimens which I have heard." \*

\* Gresley's *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus*.

In confirmation of these remarks the observations of Professor Bautain may be cited with advantage, though he may be somewhat biassed in his judgment by his strong and exclusive adherence to extempore delivery. "Notes," he observes, "may doubtless have their utility, especially in business speaking, as at the bar, at the council board, or in a deliberative assembly. Sometimes they are even necessary to remember facts, or to state figures. They are the material part, the baggage of the orator; and he should lighten it, and disencumber himself of his burden, to the utmost of his power. In truth, on the very occasions, when notes should seem to be the most needed, they are totally worthless. In the most fervid moments of extemporaneous speaking when light teems, and the sacred fire burns, when the mind is hurried along upon the tide of thoughts, and the tongue, obedient to its impulse, accommodates itself in a wonderful manner to its operations, you can no longer even read your notes on the paper. You see the lines without understanding them, and they become an embarrassment, instead of a help. *Nothing so thoroughly freezes the oratorical flow as to consult those wretched*

*notes.* Nothing is so inimical to the prestige of eloquence; it brings down to the common earth both the speaker and his audience. Try, then, when you have to speak, to carry all things in yourself, and after having, to the best of your ability, conscientiously prepared, allow yourself, filled with your subject, to be borne along by the current of your ideas, and the tide of words, and, above all, by the Spirit from on high, who enlightens and inspires. He who cannot speak unless with notes, knows not how to speak, nor what speaking is."

But though these objections seem undoubtedly to hold against *persevering* in such a system, they lose much of their force in reference to the Preacher who wishes thereby to prepare himself to be eventually an extemporaneous Preacher. Thus Bishop Burnet recommends his young Clergyman to test the strength of his pinions in short passages extemporaneously. "He must try himself at smaller excursions from his fixed thoughts, especially in the applicatory parts, where flame and life are more necessary, and where a mistaken word, or an unfinished period are less observed and sooner forgiven, than in the explanatory part, where men ought to speak

more severely. And as one succeeds in such short excursions, he may give himself a further scope, and so, by a long practice, he will at last arrive at so great an easiness both in thinking and speaking, that a very little meditation will serve to lay open a text to him, and all the matter that belongs to it." \*

It remains that we direct our attention to that use of notes, which assimilates the preaching far more to the *extemporaneous* method. In this case the notes are much shorter, and are designed *not to be read to the audience*, but simply to refresh the memory of the Preacher in his onward course.

In favour of this mode of preaching we have the testimony of many distinguished authorities, both in ancient and modern times. Among these Archbishop Secker (himself an eminent Preacher) may be cited. After speaking at length, in one of his Charges, on the relative advantages of written sermons and extempore preaching, he recommends the use of written *sketches*, combined with extempore delivery, as "a middle way, used by some of our predecessors;" and he significantly adds,

\* Pastoral Care, chap. ix.

“Perhaps, duly managed, this would be the best.”

Bishop Beveridge also appears to have thought highly of this method, if we may judge from his four volumes of sketches, under the title of *Thesaurus Theologicus*, published after his death, and which he appears to have written solely for his own use.

Such also was the method adopted by Cecil, whose preaching was so greatly appreciated by the highly intellectual congregation to whom he ministered. Among the Preachers of that day there was none perhaps that excelled the celebrated Thomas Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary's, Leicester, with the exception of the still more celebrated Robert Hall, of the same town. In his interesting *Life*, by the late Rev. E. T. Vaughan, his mode of preaching, in early life from a carefully written manuscript, and in mature years by an extemporaneous use of short notes, is graphically detailed. And not only so, but we are there furnished with specimens of the notes, which Mr. Robinson used in the pulpit. One of these sketches may suffice to give the young Preacher, who may aspire to follow his steps, a proper notion on the subject.



## 2 COR. iv. 16.

*“For which cause we faint not ; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”*

We are anxious for the welfare of friends.  
This not wrong—but our attention too confined.

We look to the body—forget the soul.

Bodily health of great value—that of the soul greater.

Is yours what you understand ? Examine.

Text describes a prosperous state of soul in bodily weakness. 3 John ii.

Consider,

I. The renovation of the soul.

Beginning of life—why necessary.

Not mere amendment of life, or reformation.

Faculties restored to their proper use.

(1) Understanding. (2) Will. (3) Affections.

Inquire as to the reality of religion.

## II. The gradual progress of the work.

Life is at first in a weak state—maintained — carried on — DAY BY DAY.

Babes—children—fathers.

Little increasings—purified as metals—grow as *grass, corn, trees*. Spreads as leaven—rises as a building.

All Christians need *daily provision*.

They differ—from others—from themselves.

All mourn defects—liable to fall—do actually depart—&c. not perfect.

Should pray for their increase and revival, Phil. i. 9. Psalms.

Should seek after. Phil. iii. 12—14.  
2 Pet. iii. 18.

Lament sloth—earthliness—&c.

## III. Its obstructions. Various.

Outward troubles are a TEST, but not necessarily hindrances.

Body perishes—doomed to die—infirmities—pains—sickness—age.

Will these prevent? No—grace triumphs.

These may forward the work. Better than prosperity.

Drive to God—humble—endear Christ  
and heaven.

Glorious sights exhibited on sick beds.

But many are hindered by—

remaining corruptions.

occasional temptations.

sad relapses.

Apply,

(1.) Take care by what marks you judge.

Trust not in a mere profession.

in great confidence or joy.

Be not discouraged—

though unfitted by disorder.

though sorely tempted.

(2.) Admire the work of God—carried on—

his grace, his strength—preserving life  
against so much opposition, a spark of  
fire in the ocean.

Pray—and trust—and give thanks.

(3.) What a sad contrast in the sinner.

More careless—confirmed—obdurate—  
mischievous—fitted for destruction.

Mourn and weep. O fear!

Your outward man must perish.

Then where must you dwell?

The preceding sketch was evidently designed by the Preacher, to refresh his memory in the pulpit, should occasion require, and to keep himself within the prescribed limits of his subject. The notes themselves indicate no particular talent nor skill: the ability consisted in employing them as he did, in a distinguished and masterly manner, retaining a listening throng, hanging upon his lips, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed, by his manly, unaffected eloquence. "Who ever heard him," asks his still more eloquent panegyrist,\* "without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him; or without being struck with the perspicuity of his statement, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David, which, struck with his powerful hand, sent forth more than mortal sounds, and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid conflagrations of Cicero. The hearers of Mr. Robinson were too much occupied by the subject he presented to their attention, to waste a thought on the speaker;

\* The late Rev. Robert Hall.

this occupied a second place in the order of their reflections; but when it did occur, it assumed the character, not of superficial admiration, but of profound attachment. Their feelings towards him were not those of persons gratified, but benefitted, and they listened to his instructions, not as a source of amusement, but as a spring of living water. There never was a settled pastor, probably, who had formed a juster conception of the true end of preaching, who pursued it more steadily, or attained it to a greater extent. He preached immortal truth with a most extraordinary simplicity, perspicuity, and energy, in a style adapted to all capacities, equally removed from vulgarity and affected refinement; and the tribute paid to his exertions, consisted not in loud applauses; it was of a higher order; it consisted of penitential sighs, holy resolutions of a determination of the whole soul for God, and such impressions on the spirits of men as will form the line of separation betwixt the happy and the miserable to all eternity."

From the Memoir\* of this distinguished preacher, it appears that during the first seven

\* See *His Life*, by the late Rev. E. T. Vaughan, M. A.

years of his ministry, he composed all his sermons before preaching, and delivered them without alteration or addition from the manuscripts he had prepared. After that period he preached from short notes, such as have been given in the preceding specimen. These contained the main divisions of his subject, and a sketch of all the leading ideas which he meant to introduce, together with his formal references to Scripture. The impression produced by his written, and by his extemporary sermons, is said to have been much the same; only it was remarked that he was slower and more deliberate in the delivery of these than of the former.

## CHAPTER X.

### MEMORITER DELIVERY.

ON this mode of preaching (by which I mean the delivery of the *words* of a sermon from memory *in extenso*) I need say but little. It is a mode commended by few, and adopted by still fewer.

How generally soever the custom of delivering sermons from memory may prevail on the Continent, in Scotland, or among Nonconformists in our own country, it has never found a congenial soil in the Church of England. An attempt, indeed, was once made to establish the custom in the reign of the Second Charles, but it failed altogether, in spite of His Majesty's injunctions to the Vice Chancellors of our Universities, that the Preachers, especially

before the Court, should lay aside the practice of reading their sermons, and that "they should deliver them both in Latin and English by memory, or without book, as being a way of preaching which His Majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of all foreign churches, to the custom of the University heretofore, and the nature and intendment of that holy exercise."

The frequency of preaching in these days in our Parish Churches, as compared with former times, to say nothing of parochial visitation, would prevent the possibility of "memoriter" preaching, except in very rare instances, where much leisure and a very retentive memory may be found happily combined.

But even if it were practicable would it be desirable? Would not the repetition of a sermon from memory be objectionable in itself? Would it not appear, in most cases at least, as Archbishop Secker pointedly describes it, "like the saying of a lesson"? Nothing in my opinion would be more likely to impair the force, the pathos, and the general characteristics of a good delivery. The constant effort to recall the words from memory would so engross the mind, that no room would be left for the



play of the affections or for attention to the requirements or graces of elocution.\*

Instances, doubtless, sometimes occur in which the memory is not only so retentive, but so ready and quick in its motions, that scarcely an effort is required by the speaker to repeat even a lengthened oration "*literatim et verbatim*."† Such cases, however, are exceptional, and yield no encouragement whatever to speakers of only ordinary powers of retention and response.

\* The celebrated Epigram upon a Member of Parliament remarkable for the exquisite finish which he gave to his two or three annual "memoriter" speeches, and at the same time for his apparent want of feeling and pathos in their delivery, reads an instructive lesson on this point.

"You say —— has no heart, but I deny it:  
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it."

† Scaliger declared that in his youth he could repeat above 100 verses after reading them over only once.

## APPENDIX.

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### ON THE PRINCIPLES, PHYSIOLOGICAL, MENTAL, AND GRAMMATICAL, OF ORAL DELIVERY.

FROM *THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER*.\*

IF the practice of elocution had improved in proportion to the number of books which have been written upon it, it would long ago have attained no slight degree of advancement. Yet to this hour how few public speakers deliver themselves even passably well; and how rare is it to find one who, with the higher intellectual qualities of composition, combines the elocutionary aids of strength, melody, harmony, expression, and the numerous legitimate

\* January, 1835. See also several excellent papers on Preaching in former volumes of this valuable periodical; which, commencing in the year 1802, under the auspices of the father of the great historian Macaulay, is still recording its "observations" on men and measures connected with "Christianity."

graces which constitute a pleasing and impressive address? Such being the fact, what are the causes of the deficiency?

The first and most obvious cause is, that, among the large body of persons who are professionally called upon to speak in public, comparatively few devote themselves, as an important portion of their early training, to the diligent study of elocution. Most of the treatises which are likely to fall into the hands of a student, are rather calculated to teach the art of composition than that of speaking: they are treatises on eloquence, not elocution; rhetoric, not delivery: so that what the ancients considered the first, the second, and the third requisite in eloquence,—call it “pronunciation,” or “delivery,” or by whatever name,—is almost entirely neglected. That it should be so neglected is astonishing, if we consider its importance to every public speaker. Were half the labour bestowed upon the cultivation of solid manly elocution, which is given to attainments of far inferior value, many a public speaker would be rendered audible, impressive, and interesting, who is at present unable, with large mental powers and excellent matter, to command common attention. Men of reading are so much and so justly in the habit of bestowing their chief solicitude upon the intrinsic value of what they utter, that they are apt to neglect the mechanical part of their office. They are perhaps even disgusted at witnessing the admiration often lavished on the most jejune compositions delivered with

agreeable fluency, and they rather despise, than wish to attain, what they consider only a passport to vain popularity. Yet surely it does not become a wise man to neglect any guileless instrument of usefulness. The musical composer does not think it sufficient to write good music; he knows that it requires to be skilfully performed; and the same applies to every species of public address.

But this leads us to another cause of the neglect of this initiatory study, which is, that public speakers are not in general aware how much may be done by judicious management to improve their delivery. They impute their deficiencies too hastily to unavoidable causes; they have weak lungs, or imperfect organs of voice or articulation; they cannot get over 'natural defects;' it is impossible for them to speak more loudly, distinctly, or forcibly; and thus, in the ignorance of despair, they never seriously make the attempt. But has it never occurred to such persons, that some of the greatest masters of public speaking have been men who actually laboured under some physical impediment, which they were obliged with much care to strive against, till in the effort they at length surpassed others who had no such inconvenience; while, on the other hand, it frequently happens that where nature, as the phrase is, has done much, the favoured party does nothing; so that in the end the hare is outstripped by the tortoise.

If the pupils of teachers of elocution become less effective or pleasing speakers than they would

otherwise have been, this must arise either from the rules which they have adopted being unsound, or from their not being well mellowed in their practice. Demosthenes probably enunciated the letter *rho*, for a considerable time after his attention to the subject, much worse than before he attempted to correct his fault; and had he listened to the advice of ignorant auditors he would probably have been dissuaded from continuing his efforts.\* Every student who is beginning carefully to amend his reading or speaking, must be prepared for the exclamation, 'Well, if *that* is learning to speak, may I never be condemned to hear such speaking again!' He must feel that

\* The case of Demosthenes is often cited, but we have never seen it physiologically considered. What, for instance, was the benefit of his running up a hill while declaiming? and also of putting pebbles in his mouth?

In imitation of his example, students of elocution have been very frequently recommended to run up a hill declaiming. Thus Dr. Bailey, in his "Art of Pronunciation and Singing," says: "To acquire a long breath, and strengthen the lungs, there can be found perhaps no better method than to run often up some ascent, especially in the morning, *without suffering the lungs to play quick, in the manner called panting.*" The rationale of this advice is to strengthen the muscles of respiration, so that they may act forcibly; yet at the same time to gain such vigour in the little muscle that closes the glottis, and such command over it, as to be able to keep the wind-chest air-tight, so that it may be capable of sustaining a strong pressure from the ribs and diaphragm, without bursting open till directed to do so at the volition of the speaker. If the valve lets out

his object is to speak naturally, forcibly, and appropriately, without any affected tones or cadences; and that what may appear for a time awkward, is but a step towards being natural: it is an effort to leave off what was incorrect, or feeble, or ill-judged, or ungraceful, and to substitute something better. A young man at college, who should determine to leave off the mouthing and artificial intonation with which he was accustomed to spout a public-school declamation, would probably at first find his utterance, when not thus stilted, miserably tame; and practice and good judgment would be required to throw his energies into a right channel. A few partial faults may be easily eradicated; but to unlearn a whole tissue of wrong habits of early life, requires a taste, a feeling, an ear, and a perseverance, which few persons possess.

We shall not attempt to detail the various causes why publicspeakers so often acquire unpleasing modes of address; but one of them is the following:— Ordinary speaking is a sort of miniature, in which blemishes and defects, though they may be numerous, are too minute to be noticed; but the same picture, when magnified to the proportions of public speak-

the air before sufficient muscular vigour is impressed upon the chest, there is no power of adequate vibration in the larynx for forcible vocality. To know the design of the practice is to aid the object; for it is not convenient for every student to run up hills declaiming: but considerable accessions of theoretic and laryngeal vigour may be attained, by due exercise and habit, even in a chamber.

ing, becomes more conspicuous, and each part occupies a large share of observation. Many a person will pronounce a sentence with tolerable correctness in ordinary conversation, who, if called upon to repeat it in a slow and deliberate manner, will betray a variety of faults, which before were scarcely discernible. This happens still more frequently in *reading* than in speaking; and most of all in addressing a large auditory. For this reason, among others, the clergy, generally speaking, are far from being the best public speakers. Their manner, whether cheerful or grave, slow or rapid, inflected or monotonous, or however differing in other respects, is often *unnatural*. To read or speak to a large auditory, especially in a church, and on a sacred subject, in a manner really *natural*, is a difficult attainment. Every thing conspires to prevent, in many cases, even the attempt. But supposing the attempt made, the first error would probably be an appearance of *familiarity*; but this is *not* natural; for nothing is, or ought to be, less natural than familiarity in such a place and on such an occasion. To avoid familiarity therefore, pompousness, or declamation, or artificial intonation, is perhaps resorted to: besides which, the time is set too fast or too slow; the inflections are either almost monotonous, or are varied to a rant; in short, the whole is any thing but *natural*.

Indeed, the very circumstance of wishing to speak with force, or with pathos, or even with loudness, so as to be heard by a considerable assembly,

is almost sure both to magnify habitual faults, and to create new ones. To recur to a former allusion : there are few men whose ordinary speaking is sufficiently correct to bear being magnified to the size necessary for a public address : \* besides which, in general the magnifying process is accompanied by another, which, to keep up the metaphor, may be compared to the unequal operation of certain optical glasses, which not only *enlarge* but *distort* the image. If, for example, a person is somewhat too nasal, or buccinal, or pectorial, or guttural, or dental, or sibilant, in his ordinary speech (and there are few

\* The first lesson of a teacher of elocution is to direct the student to pronounce deliberately and forcibly all the elementary sounds of the language (which are more numerous than the letters of the alphabet); and in most cases it is found that he cannot do this with precision; that he cannot either give the correct sound, or sustain it for a prolonged time. He cannot, as it were, *sol fa* his speech. The unintelligible sounds known by the name of 'London cries' are an exemplification of the difficulty which an uneducated person finds in speaking loudly and slowly what he can speak well enough in conversation. If the itinerant tried to give the right articulation, he could not: he speaks by rote, but he cannot analyse the several elements. The same remark applies in its degree to not a few public speakers. A vowel passes off glibly in current speech; but a public speaker must learn to dwell upon, and prolong and swell it, without whining, or ranting, or drawing. If he cannot rehearse the single elements, *a, e, i, o, u, &c.* in this manner separately, as an exercise, how can he duly fill them out in solemn speech?



speakers who have *no* such faults), the defect will be far more visible in public speaking, where he exerts himself with more energy. Again, different persons employ, in different proportions, different parts of the organs of voice and articulation—for almost every man has some parts of his organs of speech better formed or developed than the others, and on which, therefore, he learns principally to depend; or he has been accustomed, by morbid habit, to admit this undue preponderance:—when, therefore, he exerts himself in public speaking, the favoured part will naturally take more than its due share of the extra burden. This will destroy the whole symmetry of speech. The question is immediately asked, ‘Why does not that man speak in public as he does in private?’ The just answer might be, ‘He did not know how to do so.’ A correct volition is not sufficient; knowledge and practice are necessary to render most persons able to speak in public as they do in private. To say nothing of timidity, anxiety, and various other affections of mind, which might disturb the balance, a speaker, even when he has most self-possession, when he is really affected with his subject, and has everything in his favour, may still find it difficult to be *natural* when placed in a situation so artificial as that described.

A clergyman has greater difficulties to contend with than a barrister. A legal advocate usually addresses but a few individuals, and these at no great distance. His subjects also are of ordinary

occurrence; and everything *unnatural* would be injurious to his cause. He therefore must appear as if really *talking*, only with more than usual pathos and energy. The voice thus assumes nearly its regular conversational pitch; indeed, it would be difficult to speak under such circumstances in any other, except where the speaker has occasion to *declaim*, which does not come into the present consideration. A counsellor could not address a judge in the pitch and tones employed by many clergymen in large churches: he must literally *talk*: he may be swift or slow, forcible or feeble, pathetic or facetious, but he must *talk*. This keeps him within due bounds. Whatever may be his zeal for his client, his professional eagerness, or the stimulus of opposition, his voice must be conversational.

But a clergyman is usually placed under very different circumstances. Ordinarily, he reads, instead of speaks, which of itself is one deviation from nature. Then again his auditory is at a distance, and perhaps not always alive to the subject; and there is nothing in the shape of reply or contradiction to keep alive the feeling of *reality*. There is therefore danger of becoming, on the one hand, careless and monotonous, or, on the other, declamatory. Determined to be *heard*, he pours forth an undue volume of voice, without sufficient *articulation* and vibration. This may lead to a habit of being clamorous without being forcible; a habit the opposite of that of being energetic without being noisy. A speaker who thus unfairly uses his wind

instrument is in danger of losing his voice, as has been the lot of many clergymen of great zeal. But a speaker who depends more on the stringed part of his instrument, and makes himself heard and felt by vibration rather than by noise, seldom injures either his voice or constitution by public speaking.

If a young man, on first taking Holy Orders, resolutely determined, till the habit became familiar, to be distinctly heard in a large auditory, without making more *noise* than he finds easy to his own organs of speech and to his neighbours' ears, he would naturally be led to vibrate his sounds, in the manner which is observable in the impressive parts of the elocution of a good speaker. In really powerful yet easy speaking, scarcely a muscle of the face is in a state of tension ; the mouth assumes an intelligent placidity, which indicates that every fibre and cartilage vibrates freely with every sound that issues from the windpipe, thus augmenting its fulness, variety, and impressiveness of intonation.\*

\* The common direction to young clergymen, to look at the most distant part of their auditory, and to address them, tends, *if not rightly understood*, to strain the voice. In speaking to a person at a distance, we naturally raise our pitch ; and we could not long speak thus without raving and hoarseness. What a public speaker should desire to attain, is due loudness, not shrillness ; not a high pitch of voice, but force in his natural pitch. If a young clergyman would learn to be heard by the most distant person in his audience without straining his voice, he should pitch it at *its conversational height*, and try to speak with sufficient

We would not be understood to mean that all the elementary discipline which we have described is needful for every person when first he begins to speak in public. Some men have a voice so powerful, that even their ordinary sounds are sufficient to fill a large building; and others have had correct principles mellowed into practice in their childhood, without their knowledge. Mr. Pitt was a powerful public speaker at the age of twenty years; but it was because, in addition to great native powers, he had been early instructed by his illustrious parent; so that he had little or nothing to unlearn. This, however, is not often the case; for it does not often happen that a Pitt has a Chatham for the tutor of his infancy and childhood. Mr. Pitt had only to *magnify* his ordinary conversation to render it fit for public speaking: the elements were correct.

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To the foregoing observations, the following may not improperly be added. They are taken from a paper in the *Christian Observer*, for March, 1835.

. . . . . ‘Permit me to recal to your own recollection, and to that of your readers, a paper in your volume for 1821, under the

loudness and force in that key, but avoid being betrayed into a higher note. The organs of speech will gradually strengthen themselves in the proper key; and the speech will thus be audible without being unnatural.

signature of 'Pastor,' (which was reprinted and circulated among some of the young men in Cambridge, by our venerable friend Mr. Simeon, without any secret being made of the authorship of the paper,) containing some valuable suggestions, in his own striking manner, which will bear repetition in your columns, especially as some of your present readers may not have the volume for 1821 before them. Your venerable correspondent appears to have concurred by anticipation with yourself, in considering the usual habits of clerical enunciation as an 'unnatural and artificial' mode of speaking; and also in what you have said of the impropriety of the oft-repeated recommendation to regulate the voice by looking at a distant auditor, which is almost sure to cause an undue exaltation of 'pitch;'—instead of determining to keep the pitch at its natural conversational height, but giving to the voice, by effort and practice, due loudness, vibration and intensity, and also by clearly articulating every element. I have heard Mr. Simeon himself 'thrill an audience' as you express it, in a voice scarcely audible: while many injudicious speakers bellow inarticulate volumes of sound, to the serious distress of their own chest and windpipe, and the tympana of the ears of their auditors, but with little access either to the understanding or the heart.

Mr. Simeon's directions are as follow:—

'Diaconus. Is there any thing against which you would particularly guard me in delivering my sermons?'

‘Pastor. Yes: guard against speaking in an unnatural and artificial voice.

‘D. I am glad you have mentioned this: for I perceive that almost every minister in the pulpit, speaks in a voice which he never uses on any other occasion: and I am well assured, that it is that which makes sermons in general so uninteresting. Can you tell me how I may manage to find, as it were, my natural voice?

‘P. Yes: before you read your sermon at home, speak some sentence in a whisper to your chair, or writing desk, if you please, as to a living object; and then suppose this imaginary auditor to recede from you to the distance of five yards, ten yards, twenty yards, and strengthen your voice progressively in proportion to the distance: and then again, suppose him to approach you gradually, in the manner in which he had receded, and let the force of your voice proportionably abate, till on account of his proximity, you find a whisper will suffice. Do this; and if your whisper at the beginning and end be a natural whisper, you may be sure that you have kept your natural voice. If you speak to two thousand people, you should not rise to a different key, but still preserve your customary pitch. The only difference you are to make, is from the piano to the forte of the same note. You know that on a violoncello, you may sound scarcely to be heard: or, that you may strike it with such force, that it shall twang again. So it is with your voice: it is by the strength and not by the elevation of it that you are

heard. You will remember that a whole discourse is to be delivered : and if you get into an unnatural key, you will both injure yourself, and weary your audience.

‘ D. And is this the plan you would recommend for reading the prayers ?

‘ P. No : I have an easier and better plan for that. Never *read* the prayers, but *pray* them. Utter them precisely as you would if you were addressing the Almighty, in the same language in your secret chamber : only, of course, you must strengthen your voice as in the former case.’









